

1906.

QUEENSLAND.



SUGAR INDUSTRY LABOUR COMMISSION.

REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION

APPOINTED TO

Inquire into and Report regarding the Number of Pacific Islanders to be Deported from Queensland at the end of the Current Year, the most efficient manner of Repatriating them, with the probable Cost thereof; whether there are in Queensland any Pacific Islanders whose Compulsory Deportation would be inconsistent with humanity or with good faith; and whether Sufficient Labour for carrying on the Queensland Sugar Industry is likely to be available when Pacific Islanders can no longer be lawfully employed, and, if sufficient labour for such purpose is not likely to be locally obtainable, the best means of supplying the deficiency;

TOGETHER WITH THE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS, MINUTES OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
BEFORE THE COMMISSION, AND APPENDICES.

COMMISSIONERS:—

R. A. RANKING, Esquire, P.M., CHAIRMAN.

W. T. PAGET, Esquire, M.L.A.

C. F. NIELSON, Esquire, M.L.A.

J. BRENNAN, SECRETARY.

J. T. H. BIRD, ASSISTANT SECRETARY.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY COMMAND.

BRISBANE:

BY AUTHORITY: GEORGE ARTHUR VAUGHAN, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, WILLIAM STREET.

1906

C.A. 15—1906.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MINISTRY

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The Honourable Crawford David Nalder, M.L.A.	Deputy Premier and Minister for Agriculture and Electricity
The Honourable Chalres Walter Michael Court, O.B.E., M.L.A.	Minister for Industrial Development and the North West
The Honourable Edgar Henry Mead Lewis, M.L.A.	Minister for Education and Native Welfare
The Honourable Arthur Frederick Griffith, M.L.C.	Minister for Mines and Justice, and Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
The Honourable William Stewart Bovell, M.L.A.	Minister for Lands, Forests and Immigration
The Honourable Ross Hutchinson, D.F.C., M.L.A.	Minister for Works and Water Supplies
The Honourable Leslie Arthur Logan, M.L.C.	Minister for Local Government, Town Planning and Child Welfare
The Honourable James Frederick Craig, M.L.A.	Chief Secretary and Minister for Police and Traffic
The Honourable Desmond Henry O'Neil, M.L.A.	Minister for Housing and Labour
The Honourable Raymond James O'Connor, M.L.A.	Minister for Transport and Railways
The Honourable Graham Charles MacKinnon, M.L.C.	Minister for Health, Fisheries and Fauna, and Environmental Protection.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMISSION.

MONDAY, 2 APRIL, 1906.

PURSUANT to Letters Patent, bearing the Great Seal of the State of Queensland, and dated 2nd April, 1906, the Commissioners met in Bundaberg, at 9 p.m., after their arrival from Brisbane.

Present :
Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman) | Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission was read, and ordered to be printed and attached to the report.

Letters were read from the Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, notifying the appointment of Mr. James Brennan as Secretary to the Commission, and of Mr. J. T. H. Bird as Assistant Secretary.

Resolved, That the Commission shall meet daily at 9.30 a.m. for deliberation, and that evidence shall be taken from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 2 p.m. till 4 p.m., unless otherwise ordered.

Resolved, That two members of the Commission shall form a quorum.

Resolved, That the Press be admitted while the Commission is taking evidence, but not while it is deliberating.

Resolved, That the Commission, through the Press, invite evidence, and also by letter, if necessary.

Resolved, That a letter be written to the Chief Secretary's Department, asking for certain correspondence, papers, and information between the Chief Secretary's Department and any person whatsoever with reference to the repatriation of Pacific Islanders.

The Secretary was instructed to insert advertisements in the local papers notifying that the Commission would sit at Childers on Saturday, 7th April, at 10.15 a.m., and at Gin Gin on Monday, 9th April, at 10 a.m.

The Secretary was instructed to write to the Chief Secretary's Department acknowledging receipt of the Commission, and also to write to the Subcollector of Customs, Bundaberg, asking him to furnish the Commission with the following information, namely—(a) Number of canegrowers in his district who are registered for bounty; (b) Number of white men employed in the Bundaberg district during the last sugar season; and (c) Average wages paid to every class of such employees.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

TUESDAY, 3 APRIL, 1906.

(Bundaberg.)

Present :
Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman) | Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following correspondence was read:—

From the Immigration Agent, Brisbane, to the Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, dated 9th March, 1906, suggesting the advisability of calling for tenders for the sole right to carry Pacific Islanders to their homes, with draft form of tender attached—which letter was referred to the Commission by the Honourable the Chief Secretary.

Telegram to *Bundaberg Mail* re advertising Bundaberg meetings of the Commission.

Letter to the Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, asking for all correspondence, papers, &c., relating to the subject-matters which had been referred to the Commission for investigation and report.

To Mr. Scott, late of the New Hebrides, asking him to give evidence in Brisbane or to furnish a written statement under various headings.

Telegram to Mr. Edward Rogers, Sydney, Secretary to the Bishop of Melanesia, advising him of the dates for Brisbane sittings.

To the Subcollector of Customs, Bundaberg, asking for certain statistics.

From Thomas W. Walker, Hon. Secretary Woongarra Canegrowers' and Farmers' Association, and from A. C. Wills, Secretary to the Bundaberg and District Manufacturers' Union, advising the Commission of the names of witnesses to represent the views of the respective bodies.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Thomas Wilson Walker, Angus Nielson Dahl, William James Tutin, Daniel William Mahoney, George Pringle, Frederick Lewis Nott, Horace Edward Broughton Young, James Clark, Charles William Buss, and Lenhart Lutz.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

WEDNESDAY, 4 APRIL, 1906.

(Bundaberg.)

Present :
Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman) | Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

A letter written to the Collector of Customs, Brisbane, asking for certain statistics re white labourers in the various sugar districts of Queensland, was read.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Frederick Courtice, Henry Albert Cattermull, H. St. George Catfield, Hon. Angus Gibson, M.L.C., and Philip Llewellyn Elliot.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

XLVIII.

THURSDAY, 5 APRIL, 1906.

(Bundaberg.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

|
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

A report was read from the Subcollector of Customs, Bundaberg, in reply to letter of 3rd instant. The Secretary was instructed to acknowledge receipt.

The Secretary was also instructed to write to the police magistrate, Rockhampton, asking for the use of the courthouse for Saturday, 14th instant; and to the Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Rockhampton, asking for a tabulated statement, showing the number of islanders resident in the Rockhampton district, their names, the islands to which they belong, their ages, whether married or single, and, if married, the names and nationalities of their wives, the number, sex, and ages of their offspring, together with the length of time each of the islanders has been resident in Queensland. Further, to ask him to be good enough to communicate with any persons desirous of giving evidence before the Commission.

Resolved, That particulars of the sitting at Gin Gin on Monday, 9th April, be advertised in the *Mail* of Friday and the *Star* of Saturday.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Captain William Rees Reynolds, Miss Florence Young, John Edmund Barrow Hammond, George Livingstone, and H. St. G. Caulfield (recalled).

R. A. RANKING, *Chairman*.

FRIDAY, 6 APRIL, 1906.

(Bundaberg.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

|
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Thomas Wilson Sloane, Maluini (Pacific Islander), Manatah (Pacific Islander), Lunacona (Pacific Islander), Sassack (Pacific Islander), G. P. Barber, M.L.A., J. R. Brand, John Carter, and James Matthewson.

R. A. RANKING, *Chairman*.

SATURDAY, 7 APRIL, 1906.

(Childers.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

|
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse at Childers, at 10 a.m., and examined the following witnesses:—Oscar Eugene Power, Thomas Swanton, John William Clayton, William Thomas Horswill Job, Herbert Epps, Sinclair Manson, Alexander Adie, John Smith, Frank Cooper, Alexander Kastaughffe, John Thompson, Charles Edgar Adams, Harry W. Lee, Niels Lauritz Rosenlund, Evi (native of Santo), Lontal (native of Api), Bittoon (native of Api), Gaymoona (native of Savu), Laffa (native of Tanna), Bagoah (native of Sandwich), Jimmy Ailece (native of Gala), Tew (native of Ambrym), and Thomas Hubert Wells.

R. A. RANKING, *Chairman*.

MONDAY, 9 APRIL, 1906.

(Gin Gin.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

|
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse at Gin Gin, at 10:30 a.m., and examined the following witnesses:—William Cran, Frederick Applin, George Handley, Ezra Crampton, John Poliman, Thomas Christian Jensen, Ernest Hockings, Philip Flori, David Frederick Johnston, and Sergeant Henry Randel.

R. A. RANKING, *Chairman*.

TUESDAY, 10 APRIL, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

|
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 3 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House, at 10 a.m.

The minutes of meetings of Friday, 6th April (Bundaberg), Saturday, 7th April (Childers), and Monday, 9th April (Gin Gin), were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses were examined:—John O'Neil Brenan (Immigration Agent and Officer in Charge of Pacific Island Labour), Arthur Hugh Neville Ussher (Government Agent), and George Robert Townsend (officer connected with the Government Labour Bureau).

R. A. RANKING, *Chairman*.

WEDNESDAY, 11 APRIL, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 3 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House, at 10 a.m. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

A report was received from Mr. O. E. Power, Clerk of Petty Sessions, Childers, upon various points connected with Pacific Islanders at present resident in Queensland.

A telegram was received from Mr. George Williams, Maryborough, stating that Mr. Arthur Thomson, Government Agent on the "Sydney Belle," would arrive in Brisbane on Wednesday evening.

Resolved, That the Brisbane manager of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company be asked to give instructions to his managers in North Queensland to give the Commission any information at their disposal regarding the methods adopted by the company for harvesting the crop, and their experience with regard to the class of labour offering for the work.

Resolved, That the examination of all other Brisbane witnesses be deferred till the return of the Commission from the North.

In the absence of any witnesses, the Commission proceeded to revise proofs of Bundaberg evidence received from the Government Printer.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

SATURDAY, 14 APRIL, 1906.

(Rockhampton.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse, Rockhampton, at 10 a.m.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Telegram received from the Immigration Agent, Brisbane, *in re* probability of the Commission visiting Thursday Island.

Resolved, That a reply be sent intimating that it was not intended to visit Thursday Island.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Francis Hopkins, Rev. Joseph Broadhurst Brocklehurst, C.E., James Lacombe, Alfred Asisford, Peter Wiene (native of Lifu), Alfred Malezieux (native of New Caledonia), and Albert Phillips.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

SATURDAY, 14 APRIL, 1906.

(North Rockhampton.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission visited the settlement of Pacific Islanders at North Rockhampton in the afternoon.

The following witnesses were examined:—Edward Hector McKay; and Pacific Islanders as follow: Charley Ewed, Alfred Malezieux, Billy Wooltam, Jimmy Pentecost, Waytour, Goliern Narto (wife of Alick Ling, otherwise Willingie), Andrew Taysin, Peter Arroo, John Ewed, and Peter Wiene.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

TUESDAY, 17 APRIL, 1906.

(Mackay.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—William Begg Fordyce, Edward Swayne, Robert Adams, John O'Riordan, John Smart, Hugh McCready, John Curwen Penny, Robert McEwen, Philip Kirwan, Henry Tongoa (Pacific Islander), James Tait, and Francis Charles Hornbrook.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

WEDNESDAY, 18 APRIL, 1906.

(Mackay.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—John Lunny, Rowland Martin Shannon, Francis Charles Hornbrook, Charles Reader Klugb, James Grant Enright, Rev. John McLean McIntyre, Charles Grace Sage, Thomas Ryan, Edward Benman, Joseph Barlow, Edward Swayne, Frederick Charles Macnish, Henry Bowyer Black, Edward Martin, and Douglas Rennie.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

L.

THURSDAY, 19 APRIL, 1906.

(Marian.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the offices of the Mariau Central Mill Company at Marian.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Resolved, That an advertisement be inserted in the Mackay papers inviting any persons desirous of giving evidence to communicate with the Secretary in order to make arrangements for such further sittings at Mackay as might be necessary.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—James Augustus Edwards, Robert Armstrong, Charles Edward Lucas, Edwin John Rowe, Edward Hannan, John Riddell, Daniel Markey, and David Coyne.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

FRIDAY, 20 APRIL, 1906.

(Homebush.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the school of arts, Homebush.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Samuel Arbuthnot, Thomas Staines Howard, Jens Peter Sorensen, Frank James Stercus, George Windsor, Donald Beaton, Sigges (native of Lifu), Noah Sabbot (Polynesian, born in Queensland), Frank Bennett, and Thomas Leonard.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

SATURDAY, 21 APRIL, 1906.

(Mirani.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse at Mirani.

The minutes of meetings of Thursday, 19th April, and Friday, 20th April, were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—John Harrington, Emanuel Dark, and Edward Hogan.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

MONDAY, 23 APRIL, 1906.

(Eton.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse at Eton.

The minutes of the meeting of Saturday, 21st April, were read and confirmed.

A letter was read from Mr. J. Hamilton Scott with reference to the deportation of Pacific Islanders to the New Hebrides, and the probability of the absorption of their labour in that group.

Resolved, That the letter be embodied in the evidence as an appendix—[*Vide* Appendix V.]

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Richard Dempsey Dunne, John Temple, Thomas Wolfe, Frederick Rebetzke, Eli Boldan, Harry Webster, and Robert Stubbin.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

TUESDAY, 24 APRIL, 1906.

(Plane Creek.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met at the Plane Creek Central Mill Company's office.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Henry Edward Turner, William German, and John Christopherson Nicholson.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

THURSDAY, 26 APRIL, 1906.

(Proserpine.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse at Proserpine, and examined the following witnesses —William Harold Ryan, Robert Charles Dagg, William Grosskreuz, Joseph Cooper, Joseph Busuttin, Walter Wix, Edward Boyle, John Macdonald, James Reid, Henry Crawshaw Sterry, William John Taylor, John Hindmarsh, Ludwig Jensen Breusch, Edward William Mackenzie, Alexander Perkins, Harry Winter, Thomas Bellman, Alfred Smith, and George Yassari.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

FRIDAY, 27 APRIL, 1906.

(Proserpine.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse, and examined the following witnesses:—Robert Blair and Joseph Anderson,

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

FRIDAY, 4 MAY, 1906.

(Mossman.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the offices of the Mossman Central Mill Company, at Mossman.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Frank William Barnard, William Henry Buchanan, George Nielson, James Patrick Reynolds, Andrew Jack, George Woodville Muntz, Robert Puntun Tunnie, William Mackay, Shirley Archibald, John Richard Edmonds, William Trevor Francis, Richard Augustine Donnelly, Richard Owen Jones, and Aekar (Pacific Islander).

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

FRIDAY, 4 MAY, 1906.

(Port Douglas.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in Port Douglas in the evening, after returning from the Mossman River, and examined Arthur Staines, Inspector of Pacific Islanders.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

MONDAY, 7 MAY, 1906.

(Cairns.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse.

The minutes of meetings at Elton, Plane Creek, Proserpine, Mossman, and Port Douglas, were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Philip George Ellis, John Delahunt, Peter George Grant, Niels Peter Petersen, Alexander Mann, Christian Peter Andersen, Charles Crawford Smyth, John Mann, M.L.A., Assool (Pacific Islander), Tom Low (Pacific Islander), Foonah (Pacific Islander), and William Pettigrew Wilson.

Resolved, That a telegram be despatched to the Chief Secretary, Brisbane, advising that ss. "Lady Norman" be sent as soon as available to take "return" islanders from Port Douglas and ports to the southward.

R. A. RANKING Chairman.

LII.

THURSDAY, 10 MAY, 1906.

(Nelson—Mulgrave Central Mill.)

Present: Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman) | Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in Cannon's Hall, Nelson, and examined the following witnesses:—Reuben Smith, Hugh Niven, George Milroy, Henry Merz, John Mullins, Bernard Ferdinand Walk, Smith William Davids, John Greer, and William Charles Griffin.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

FRIDAY, 11 MAY, 1906.

(Hambledon.)

Present: Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman) | Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in O'Brien's Hall, and examined the following witnesses:—James Campbell, Thomas Binnie, Peter Petersen, August Rüttinger, and Sam Kerec (Pacific Islander).

No further evidence being forthcoming up till 7:30 p.m., Messrs. Ranking and Nielson returned to Cairns. Mr. Paget remaining at Hambledon. During the course of the evening a number of employees at Hambledon waited upon Mr. Paget at the residence of Mr. Thomas Binnie, and the following witnesses were examined by Mr. Paget:—William Henry Clark, William Burke, Alexander Brodie Crampton, John Walter Cooper, and William Clarke.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

MONDAY, 14 MAY, 1906.

(Cairns.)

Present: Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman) | Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse.

The minutes of the meetings in Cairns on 7th May, Mulgrave on 10th May, and Hambledon on 11th May, were read and confirmed.

The evidence taken by Mr. Paget at Hambledon on Friday evening, 11th instant, was read.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Darby Lyon, Rev. Joseph Campbell (Archuleacon, C.E.), Kerecree (Pacific Islander), Harry Delano (Pacific Islander), Soona Dabie (Pacific Islander), Ererow (Pacific Islander), Quiramco (Pacific Islander), and Tommy (Pacific Islander).

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

TUESDAY, 15 MAY, 1906.

(Geraldton.)

Present: Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman) | Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—John Dempsey Sullivan, Charles William McGowan, Denis Casey, James Robert Downing, Johann Thomas, John Fletcher Harding, Alfred Boon, and Robert Lee.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

WEDNESDAY, 16 MAY, 1906.

(Geraldton.)

Present: Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman) | Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse, and examined the following witnesses:—Leonard Cecil Herten, Rev. Charles Warren Tomkins, John Matthew Malone, Duncan Sherrington, William Cuddihy, James Devon, John Paterson, William Henry Callow, Robert Waugh, Henry James Worth, Fred Tanna (Pacific Islander), Charles Edward Jodrell, and George Edmonstone Markwell.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

THURSDAY, 17 MAY, 1906.

(Geraldton.)

Present: Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (Chairman) | Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.
Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse, and further examined Charles William McGowan.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

LIII.

FRIDAY, 18 MAY, 1906.

(Ingham.)

Present :

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse, and examined the following witnesses:—Thomas Townson, William Canny, Ralph Godschall Johnson, David Greenhill Scott, Antoni Anzolin, John Johnson, James Frederick Selby, Charles Trent, and George Watson.

R. A. RANKING, *Chairman*.

SATURDAY, 19 MAY, 1906.

(Ingham.)

Present :

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse, and examined the following witnesses:—Ernest Wilfred Crow, William Harvey, Frank Fraser, Leonard Hartwell, Daniel Pearson, Reuben Morris, Frederick John Heard, Arthur William Carr, Edward Charles Biggs, Christian Rosendahl, William Ogston, Charles Lacaze, William Gollogly, Tilley Veley Mi (Pacific Islander), Suonalea (Pacific Islander), Francis Alexander Rankin, Edward Wailer, William Walker, Robert Mitchell Boyd, and Roger Michael Troy.

R. A. RANKING, *Chairman*.

TUESDAY, 22 MAY, 1906.

(Ayr.)

Present :

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse, and examined the following witnesses:—Michael Kelly, Charles Howes, George MacKersie, Thomas Connell, Alexander Fraser, Gustave George Kann, Charles Gray, Cum Cum (Pacific Islander), Tarrie (Pacific Islander), Toller (Pacific Islander), Ally Kena (Pacific Islander), Jemima (aboriginal half-caste, wife of Ally Kena), Tarrina Doolly (Pacific Islander), and Ferrugie (Pacific Islander).

R. A. RANKING, *Chairman*.

WEDNESDAY, 23 MAY, 1906.

(Ayr.)

Present :

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse, and examined the following witnesses:—George Campbell and William Payard.

R. A. RANKING, *Chairman*.

THURSDAY, 24 MAY, 1906.

(Townsville.)

Present :

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse, and examined the following witnesses:—George Washington Young and James Anderson.

The minutes of meetings at Geraklton, Ingham, and Ayr were read and confirmed.

Resolved, (1) That, after the conclusion of the sittings in Townsville, in view of the shortness of time till the date fixed for the presentation of the report, and with a view to obtaining as much information as possible upon the subject of inquiry, the Commission divide: Mr. Ranking to make further inquiries regarding the supply of labour in Townsville, Rockhampton, and Mount Morgan; Mr. Paget to proceed direct to Brisbane and there obtain further information from the Inspector of Pacific Islanders and the officer in charge of the Government Labour Bureau, to make arrangements with the Inspector of Pacific Islanders with regard to the evidence of Finns at Nambour and the securing of a Finnish interpreter, and to expedite the preparation of returns from officers of the Pacific Island Department not yet to hand; Mr. Nielson to proceed to Charters Towers to make inquiries into the supply of labour in various Western centres and take evidence if necessary. (2) That the next sitting of the Commission take place in Maryborough on Tuesday, 5th June, at 10 a.m., and that evidence be taken in that place; and thereafter in Nambour on Thursday, 7th June; in Nerang on Friday, 8th June; and in Beenleigh on Tuesday, 12th June.

R. A. RANKING, *Chairman*.

LIV.

FRIDAY, 25 MAY, 1906.

(Townsville.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses presented themselves, and were examined:—Right Rev. George Horsfall Frodsham (Anglican Bishop of North Queensland), Thomas Smyth, George Henry Pritchard, Arthur Pigrome, John Hunter, and Thomas Foley.

The Commission formally adjourned its sittings until Tuesday, 5th June, at 10 a.m., in Maryborough.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

TUESDAY, 5 JUNE, 1906.

(Maryborough.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse at 10 a.m., and examined Alfred Benjamin Martin, Manager of Mount Bauple Central Sugar Mill.

Mr. Nielson reported having taken evidence at Charters Towers on Saturday, 26th May. Evidence received.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

THURSDAY, 7 JUNE, 1906.

(Nambour.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse at 9:30 a.m., and examined the following witnesses:—William Alfred Cribb, Wilfrid Emmanuel Desplace, Otto Gustavson, and Alexander William Thynne.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

FRIDAY, 8 JUNE, 1906.

(Nerang.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse at 2 p.m., and examined the following witnesses:—Alexander Cran and Herbert James Cooper.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

SATURDAY, 9 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met at Parliament House, in No. 3 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, at 10:30 a.m.

It was resolved, That a letter be written to the Chief Secretary, pointing out that it would not be possible to present the Report of the Commission by Saturday, 16th June, the date fixed in the Commission of appointment, and asking for an extension of time to Saturday, 30th June.

It was further resolved, That a letter be written to the Chief Secretary, asking for clerical assistance for the compilation of the index to the evidence.

The Commission deliberated regarding the preparation of the Draft of their Report.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

LV.

MONDAY, 11 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met at Parliament House, in No. 3 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, at 10 a.m.

Minutes of meetings of 25th May (Townsville), 5th June (Maryborough), 7th June (Nambour), 8th June (Nerang), and 9th June (Brisbane) were read and confirmed.

The Commission further deliberated regarding their Draft Report.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

TUESDAY, 12 JUNE, 1906.

(Beenleigh.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Neilson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met in the courthouse at 10 a.m., and examined the following witnesses:—Heinrich Philip Oppenheim, Alexander Cran, Alexander Reach (Pacific Islander), Charlie Savaa (Pacific Islander), Charlie Colombi (Pacific Islander), Peter Kruman (Pacific Islander), Numakata (Pacific Islander), John Mola (Pacific Islander), and Henry Primrose.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

WEDNESDAY, 13 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Neilson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House, at 9:30 a.m., and examined the following witnesses:—Edward William Knox, John Moody Costin, John O'Neil Brennan, and Arthur Hugh Neville Ussher.

The Commission then deliberated regarding the documents to be published as appendices.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

TUESDAY, 19 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House.

Minutes of meetings of 11th June (Brisbane), 12th June (Beenleigh), and 13th June (Brisbane) were read and confirmed.

The Commission examined William Rees Reynolds, lately master of the labour vessel "Ivanhoe."

The Commission then deliberated regarding their Draft Report.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

WEDNESDAY, 20 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

Mr. W. A. Paget, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

A letter was received from the Under Secretary to the Chief Secretary's Department, bearing date 18th June, intimating that His Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, had been pleased to direct that the return of the Commission be extended from 16th June to 30th June.

The Commission further deliberated regarding the Draft Report.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

LVI.

THURSDAY, 21 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present :

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Commission further considered the Draft Report.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

FRIDAY, 22 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present :

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Commission further deliberated.

Mr. Paget formally moved, as an alternative to the proposal to collect all Pacific Islanders in camps after 31st December next, a scheme whereby islanders might be temporarily employed in tropical agriculture for further short periods, under Regulation No. 2, of 25th February, 1896, whilst awaiting transport facilities.

Messrs. Ranking and Nielson voted against the motion, which was accordingly negatived.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

SATURDAY, 23 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present :

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Commission further deliberated.

Mr. Paget moved,—That it be a recommendation that all Pacific Islanders, who should, on 31st December, 1906, have resided continuously in Australia for fifteen (15) years and upwards, be exempted from compulsory deportation.

After lengthy discussion, the further consideration of the question was adjourned until Monday next.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

MONDAY, 25 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present :

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

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Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Mr. Paget's motion, recommending the exemption of all Pacific Islanders resident continuously in Australia for fifteen (15) years and upwards prior to 31st December, 1906, was further discussed.

Motion put and negatived.

Mr. Ranking thereupon moved,—That it be a recommendation that all Pacific Islanders, who should, on 31st December, 1906, have resided continuously in Australia for twenty (20) years and upwards, be exempted from compulsory deportation.

After discussion, the motion was agreed to, Mr. Nielson dissenting.

The Commission further deliberated.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

LVII.

TUESDAY, 26 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Commission further deliberated.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

WEDNESDAY, 27 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Commission further deliberated.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

THURSDAY, 28 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Report, as finally adopted, together with the Appendices, was ordered to be printed, and submitted to the Commission on Friday morning.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

FRIDAY, 29 JUNE, 1906.

(Brisbane.)

Present:

Mr. R. A. Ranking, P.M. (*Chairman*)

|

Mr. W. T. Paget, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. Nielson, M.L.A.

The Commission met in No. 1 Legislative Assembly Committee-room, Parliament House.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Chairman submitted the Report, which was finally adopted. At a subsequent stage the Report was signed by the members of the Commission.

Messrs. Paget and Nielson handed in Riders, which were ordered to be printed and attached to the Report.

It was resolved that the Chairman present the Report to the Honourable the Chief Secretary on Saturday, 30th June, at 9.30 a.m., the time fixed by appointment with the Under Secretary to the Chief Secretary's Department.

Resolved, That a letter be sent to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, thanking him for the use of a room for the meetings of the Commission, and acknowledging the services of the messengers in attending on the Commission.

Resolved, That a letter be sent to the Government Printer, acknowledging the valuable services rendered by his staff.

Resolved, That the attention of the Chief Secretary be specially drawn to the appreciation already expressed of the highly efficient manner in which the Secretary and Assistant Secretary, respectively, have performed their very arduous duties. That mention be made of the fact that at an early stage of our duties it became apparent that our reporting staff was numerically inadequate, consequent upon which Messrs. Brennan and Bird have throughout carried out the work of three individuals. This has necessitated these officers habitually working many hours overtime; and we, therefore, recommend that a substantial honorarium be given to each of them in recognition of their services.

A cordial vote of thanks was accorded by Messrs. Paget and Nielson to the Chairman for the able, impartial, and tactful manner in which he had presided over the sittings of the Commission.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman

(Signed) P. J. McDERMOTT,
Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department.

COMMISSION.

EDWARD THE SEVENTH, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith:—

To Our Trusty and Well-beloved ROBERT ARCHIBALD RANKING, Police Magistrate of North Brisbane, WALTER TRUEMAN PAGET, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, and CHARLES FREDERICK NIELSON, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.

Greeting:

WHEREAS, in consequence of legislation enacted by the Parliament of the Commonwealth, it will not be lawful to employ Pacific Islanders in our State of Queensland after the end of the current year, save in a relatively few instances for which the said legislation has specially provided: AND WHEREAS, by virtue of the said legislation, most of the Pacific Islanders that are now in Our State of Queensland may be deported hence at the end of the current year: AND WHEREAS it is expedient to determine, (1) The number of Islanders to be deported, their present residence, the localities to which they have to be deported, and the most efficient manner of repatriating them, with the probable cost thereof; (2) Whether there be, in Our State of Queensland, any Pacific Islanders whose compulsory deportation would be inconsistent with humanity or with good faith, and if there be such, their numbers and the localities in which they are residing; (3) Whether sufficient labour for carrying on the Queensland Sugar Industry is likely to be available in Our State of Queensland when, except in the relatively few instances aforesaid, Pacific Islanders can no longer be lawfully employed, and if sufficient labour for such purpose is not likely to be locally obtainable, the best means of supplying the deficiency: Now, therefore, know ye that We, reposing especial trust and confidence in your zeal, knowledge, learning, industry, discretion, and ability, do, by these Presents, by and with the advice of Our Executive Council of Our said State, constitute and appoint you, from this Second day of April, the said ROBERT ARCHIBALD RANKING, WALTER TRUEMAN PAGET, and CHARLES FREDERICK NIELSON to be Our Commissioners, for the purpose of inquiring into the matters aforesaid, and things hereinbefore mentioned and into any other matters or things not hereinbefore specially included, information regarding which may in your judgment be likely to be of assistance to you in the inquiries hereby entrusted to you: And we do hereby require and enjoin you to make diligent inquiry into the matters aforesaid. And We do furthermore command and enjoin you to summon before you and to examine all such persons as may appear to you able to inform you concerning the premises, and to take down the evidence of the several witnesses that may appear before you, and reduce the same into writing, and such evidence, together with a full and faithful report touching the matters aforesaid, and such recommendations as you or any of you shall think fit to make concerning the same, to transmit to the Office of our Chief Secretary of Our said State, on or before the Sixteenth day of June, One thousand nine hundred and six.

And we do hereby appoint you, the said ROBERT ARCHIBALD RANKING, to be Chairman of our said Commission.

In testimony whereof, we have caused this Our Commission to be Sealed with the Seal of our said State.

Witness Our Trusty and Well-beloved The Honourable Sir POPE ALEXANDER COOPER, Knight, Chief Justice of the State of Queensland, acting as Deputy for and on behalf of His Excellency the Right Honourable FREDERIC JOHN NAPIER, Baron Chelmsford of Chelmsford, in the County of Essex, in the Peerage of the United Kingdom, Governor of Our State of Queensland and its Dependencies, in the Commonwealth of Australia, at Government House, Brisbane, this second day of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and six, and in the sixth year of Our Reign.

(Signed) POPE A. COOPER.

[L.s.]

By His Excellency's Command,

(Signed) W. KIDSTON.

Chief Secretary's Office,

Brisbane, 2nd April, 1906.

The Deputy Governor, acting for and on behalf of His Excellency the Governor, and with the advice of the Executive Council, has been pleased to appoint JAMES BRENNAN to be Secretary and JOHN T. H. BIRD to be Assistant Secretary to the Commission appointed in connection with the deportation and repatriation of Pacific Islanders.

W. KIDSTON.

1906.
—
QUEENSLAND.

ROYAL COMMISSION TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT UPON THE DEPORTATION
AND REPATRIATION OF PACIFIC ISLANDERS, AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF
LABOUR FOR THE QUEENSLAND SUGAR INDUSTRY.

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable FREDERIC JOHN NAPIER, Baron Chelmsford of Chelmsford, in the County of Essex, in the Peerage of the United Kingdom, Governor of the State of Queensland and its Dependencies, in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

In the month of April last we were honoured with Your Excellency's Commission to inquire into and report upon—" (1) The number of Pacific Islanders to be deported (from Queensland at the end of the current year), their present residence, the localities to which they have to be deported, and the most efficient manner of repatriating them, with the probable cost thereof; (2) Whether there be, in our State of Queensland, any Pacific Islanders whose compulsory deportation would be inconsistent with humanity or with good faith, and, if there be such, their numbers and the locality in which they are residing; (3) Whether sufficient labour for carrying on the Queensland Sugar Industry is likely to be available in our State of Queensland when Pacific Islanders can no longer be lawfully employed, and, if sufficient labour for such purpose is not likely to be locally obtainable, the best means of supplying the deficiency."

We entered upon our duties at Bundaberg on 2nd April, and subsequently held sittings and examined witnesses both at every considerable centre of the Sugar Industry in the State, from Nerang in the South to Port Douglas in the North, and also at other places where it appeared to us probable that evidence would be obtainable of a nature to assist us in arriving at conclusions upon the subjects under inquiry. With the object of rendering our inquiries thoroughly exhaustive, we availed ourselves with some freedom of the comprehensive powers conferred upon us by Your Excellency's Commission.

We communicated with Planters and Farmers' Associations and Workers' Unions and Associations in every district in which we could learn that such societies existed, notifying them as to when and where sittings of the Commission were intended to be held, and inviting them to appoint representatives to lay their views before us. We were at all times willing to receive evidence from persons desiring to offer themselves as witnesses.

We also took every opportunity to personally view and acquaint ourselves with the conditions of labour obtaining in connection with the sugar industry. Our researches further included inquiries into the areas of land within a reasonable distance of sugar centres which might be made available for the settlement of white workers engaged in the cultivation of sugar-cane. In addition to the evidence taken at the formal sittings of the Commission, we obtained information, whilst travelling, from a large number of European and Pacific Island workers on matters coming generally within the scope of our Commission.

Forty sittings of the Commission, notices of which were freely advertised in local newspapers, were held at twenty-seven centres for the purpose of taking evidence, and the witnesses examined numbered 304.

These witnesses were of various occupations, including canecutters and contractors, canegrowers, clergymen, commission agents, farmers, journalists, labour agents, labourers, master mariners, members of the Legislature, merchants, missionaries, Pacific Islanders, public servants (including Excise officers, Government agents, inspectors of Pacific Islanders, officers in charge of labour bureaux, and police), sugar-mill directors and managers, sugar planters, representatives of chambers of commerce and of associations interested both directly and indirectly in the sugar industry, shearers, solicitors, and storekeepers.

In addressing ourselves to the preparation of our Report, we propose to deal with the various subjects in the order in which these appear in the text of the Commission; and we shall, in conclusion, submit suggestions as to the methods appearing to us the most suitable for dealing with the same.

Commonwealth legislation differentiates between the various localities in the State in which cane-growing is being pursued; and we shall in our Report adopt these divisions, the boundaries of which are as follow:—

- “No. 1 District,” comprising all that part of Australia north of the 19th degree of south latitude;
- “No. 2 District,” comprising all that part of Australia between the 19th and 23rd degrees of south latitude;
- “No. 3 District,” comprising all that part of Australia between the 23rd and 26th degrees of south latitude;
- “No. 4 District,” comprising all that part of Australia south of the 26th degree of south latitude.

Whilst no effort has been spared to obtain reliable data as to the number of Pacific Islanders now in the various districts of the State, the migratory habits of those unemployed have rendered impossible the attainment of accuracy in this respect. The figures given as a result of local investigation must, therefore, be accepted as accurate only to the extent of defining a minimum, the maximum being supplied by the returns of the Officer in Charge of Pacific Island Labour.

1. THE NUMBER OF PACIFIC ISLANDERS LIABLE TO BE DEPORTED FROM QUEENSLAND AT THE END OF THE CURRENT YEAR, ETC.

According to a return furnished to us by the Officer in Charge of Pacific Island Labour, the number of Pacific Islanders on 10th April last in the State and on the Tweed River, in New South Wales, a majority of the latter of whom originally served under agreement in Queensland, was 6,389. We have also been furnished with a return of Pacific Islanders, numbering 691, who hold certificates of exemption under the provisions of section 11 of 47 Vic. No. 12 (Queensland), and are thus, by the provisions of section 2 (a) of No. 16 of 1901 (Commonwealth), excluded from the operation of the latter Statute. Further, we learn that since 10th April last 418 islanders have been repatriated. In order, therefore, to arrive at the actual number of islanders *prima facie* liable to deportation, it becomes necessary to deduct from the gross total of 6,389 the number of those exempt by Statute (691) and the number repatriated as stated above (418). These reductions reduce the total to 5,280.

But in estimating the value of these figures regard must be had to the following facts:—

- (a) That by section 4 of “*The Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880*,” 44 Vic. No. 17 (Queensland), islanders employed solely in pearl or bêche-de-mer fisheries are exempted from the provisions of that Statute. There are at Thursday Island and in its vicinity about 108 such persons.

- (b) Included amongst the gross total of Pacific Islanders now in Queensland are natives of New Caledonia, and of Lifu and Maré in the Loyalty Group, all of which islands are understood to be under the jurisdiction of France.

It may be noted, in passing, that the latter did not come within the definition of "Pacific Islanders" in section 2 of No. 50 Vic., No. 6 (Queensland). For this reason, although many of them were, by length of residence in the State, entitled to certificates of exemption, according to the evidence of the Officer in Charge of Pacific Island Labour (Question 3660), when they applied for such certificates many years ago, they were told that the Act did not apply to them.

In addition to this, it may be remarked that, although such islanders have served under agreements upon sugar estates in Queensland, it appears open to question whether, as French subjects, they come within the definition of the term "Pacific Islander" given in section 2 of *Pacific Island Labourers Act* 1901 (No. 16, Commonwealth). Thirteen (13) such persons, several of whom are married, reside at Rockhampton; and others are to be found scattered throughout the State. We estimate the total number to aggregate about forty (40). We may add that in more than one instance these persons expressed to us their intention of resisting compulsory deportation to the extent of appealing to a Consul of France.

There are also included a number of Fijians—probably about 30.

- (c) Careful examination of the data furnished to us by local inspectors of Pacific Islanders demonstrates that there are included in the returns a number of adult islanders and half-caste islanders, who having been born in Queensland claim to be British subjects. The majority of these persons have been educated at State schools, are of relatively high intelligence, and upon inquiry we invariably gathered a favourable report of their characters. It is most probable that such persons, whose numbers may aggregate 50, would resist compulsory deportation.

Taking as approximately correct the estimated number of persons referred to in paragraph (a)—namely, 168—in paragraph (b)—namely, 40 and 30—and in paragraph (c)—namely, 50—the total number of Pacific Islanders liable to deportation at this date may probably be deemed to aggregate 288 less than the number appearing on the registers as employed in the State. There are also 418 indentured islanders whose agreements expire between the months of July and November, both inclusive, and 245 re-engagement islanders whose agreements expire during the same period, making a total of 663 persons, the majority of whom should be placed in a position to avail themselves of the opportunity of repatriation before 31st December next. In this connection the liability of the employer with respect to the return passages of indentured islanders, regarding which there appears to be no dispute, must not be lost sight of. Upon the basis of these calculations, the number of Pacific Islanders liable to be deported at the end of the current year will stand at about 4,500; and it is probable that further repatriations during the next six months will reduce the number to 4,000. But in estimating the total number to be deported there has further to be taken into account the possibility of the extension of exemption to one or more of the classes summarised in Appendix XVII., and more particularly referred to hereafter.

From the Inspectors of Pacific Islanders in the various districts, and from the Tweed River district of New South Wales, where there are settled islanders who for the most part entered Queensland under the provisions of the Pacific Island Labourers Acts (Queensland), we have obtained particulars of the islanders known to be under agreement or otherwise in the localities named. This information we have tabulated, and attach (*vide* Appendices XVII. and XVIII.).

Upon comparison of the number of Pacific Islanders stated by the Officer in Charge of Pacific Island Labour to be subject to repatriation with the number actually known to be in the various districts, a considerable disparity will be found to exist. This disparity in numbers is to be accounted for by the fact that, consequent upon an increase of registration of cane lands for cultivation by European labour and from other causes, very many Pacific Islanders are now unable

to obtain employment. These persons roam about throughout the various sugar districts, and no means exist of accurately computing their numbers; but we estimate the same at not less than 500. The presence in the State of so large a number of unemployed islanders (which number cannot but increase) is principally due to the fact that no administrative action has been taken under the provisions of section 8 of *Pacific Island Labourers Act, 1901* (Commonwealth).

Appendix XVII., when summarised, supplies the following information:—

*Males	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4,897
*Females	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	145
Males married to or cohabiting with European women	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	40
Males married to or cohabiting with female Queensland aboriginals or half-castes	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	60
Males married to or cohabiting with women, natives of same island as the men	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	89
Males married to or cohabiting with women, natives of islands other than those of the men	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	81
Males married or cohabiting with women of any nationality other than the foregoing	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Persons who have resided in Queensland ten years, but not exceeding fifteen years	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	768
Persons who have resided in Queensland fifteen years, but not exceeding twenty years	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	765
Persons who have resided in Queensland twenty years and upwards	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	648
Persons exempted by the provisions of section 2 (a) of the Commonwealth Statute, No. 16 of 1901	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	691
Persons owning freeholds	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	13
Persons farming on leaseholds	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	317

It may here be convenient to note that the offspring of the abovementioned alliances, all of which were contracted in Queensland, total—Males, 316; females, 325; of ages ranging from a few months to twenty-one years.

Appendix XVIII. furnishes particulars of the present residences and the localities to which the islanders are to be deported.

Neither of these returns includes such Pacific Islanders as are at present unemployed, accurate official information concerning whom is not obtainable.

2. PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN QUEENSLAND WHOSE DEPORTATION WOULD BE INCONSISTENT WITH HUMANITY OR WITH GOOD FAITH.

Although unable to give actual particulars, our inquiries leave no doubt that there are in the State certain Pacific Islanders who, by reason of extreme age and bodily infirmity, would be unable to procure a livelihood if returned to their native islands. There are also individuals who have resided in Queensland for such a lengthened period as to render it highly probable that they would, upon return, find themselves complete strangers; and in some instances the very tripe of a returning islander would be found to have become extinct. In many cases a prolonged subsistence upon a European diet would be found to have completely unfitted islanders for the vegetable food which constitutes for the most part the sustenance of natives of the South Seas. Some of the islanders now in Queensland have, without doubt, resorted hither for the purpose of escaping the death punishment to which they had in their native islands rendered themselves liable consequent upon breaches of tribal laws; whilst others have fled from their homes to escape from a vendetta originating in a prevalent belief in witchcraft. According to the evidence, the compulsory deportation of such individuals to their own "passages" would be, in effect, their death warrant.

* Although the gross total represents the number of individuals, it is certain that, owing to defective information furnished to us, the distribution of sexes is not quite accurate.

In the cases of Pacific Islanders married to or cohabiting with women not natives of the same island, the life of either man or woman might be endangered; and, even failing this, in event of the death of the man, the woman would probably be ill-treated by her deceased partner's tribe.

As the Imperial Resident Commissioners will not permit the landing in the islands of European or Queensland aboriginal females, the compulsory deportation of islanders allied to such persons would lead to the enforced separation of persons virtually husband and wife.

The offspring of such unions have already been referred to. A considerable proportion of these children have been educated in State schools, and they have acquired habits which, should they be compelled to submit to the life prevailing in the islands, may result in their suffering a certain amount of hardship. The evidence given before the Commission leads us to believe that a large proportion of these children would contract the island malarial fever. To compulsorily deport the parents alone would be inconsistent with the humane treatment of both parent and child.

We submit that at least some of the islanders situated as above cannot be deported without inhumanity. Precedents exist for making exceptions as to deportation in cases of infirm islanders and those married to Europeans or to Queensland aboriginals. (*Vide* Questions 3742-3745, evidence of the Officer in Charge of Pacific Island Labour.)

To pass to the question of a breach of faith in connection with the deportation of Pacific Islanders: There is settled at North Rockhampton a group of islanders, many of whom are married and have families, the children attending a State school. Some of these persons have acquired freeholds, held for them in trust by Europeans; others are leaseholders—all are of reputable character and earning a livelihood in legitimate fashion. In various other parts of the State, islanders have acquired freeholds and leaseholds in a similar manner, and are engaged in gardening, canegrowing, and general farming. [*Vide* Appendix XVII.] The land occupied by many of these individuals was, when leased, virgin scrub, upon which much labour has been by them expended; the islanders appear to have entertained an unfounded belief that, as leaseholders, they would not be compulsorily deported; and it is certain that any action involving a forfeiture of leaseholds without compensation, or a forced sale of freehold and personal property, would entail upon these persons the very greatest hardship. So far as we can ascertain, the number of persons who have so acquired freeholds does not exceed thirteen (13).

There are also islanders who, having been introduced prior to 1st September, 1879, would, had they made application within the prescribed period, have been entitled to certificates the possession of which would have exempted them from the provisions of the Commonwealth Statute. Ignorance and the fact of having been far distant from Brisbane supply the reasons for the failure of these persons to obtain "exemption certificates." In addition to these, there are doubtless a number of islanders originally possessors of certificates of exemption which in the course of the many intervening years have been either lost or destroyed.

●Owing to our inability to obtain exhaustive official information as to what numbers of Pacific Islanders there are, together with the localities in which they are residing, whose compulsory deportation would be inconsistent with humanity or good faith, we are unable to furnish under this sub-head particulars which would be of value when the cases of such Pacific Islanders are under consideration.

So far as we have been able to ascertain, the majority at least of the islanders mentioned in the preceding paragraphs are law-abiding men, have no desire to leave Queensland, and have until recently believed that their compliance with the laws of this State would serve to protect them from enforced deportation. Any recommendations we may make upon this subject will be framed with a recognition of the fact that the persons to be affected are a race relatively helpless; but they include isolated individuals predisposed to foment amongst their fellows active hostility to action which, in their ignorance, they may deem oppressive. In case the hostility so aroused may have far-reaching effects in some of the less civilised of the Pacific Islands, we deem it our duty to point out that the existence of this feeling has come under our notice.

3. REPATRIATION.

As to the most efficient method of repatriating such Pacific Islanders as it is deemed advisable to deport and the probable cost of deportation, the honour of the State being involved in the question of repatriation in accordance with the terms of the original contract made with each Pacific Islander, the deportation should be carried out strictly in accordance with the spirit of that contract.

We desire to point out that there is at present a difficulty existent in regard to the question of the responsibility of the last employer of a Pacific Islander for any excess cost of passage-money above the sum of £5 originally deposited for the payment of that item. We presume that, before it becomes necessary for action to be taken under the Commonwealth Statute, this question of liability will have been determined. Keeping in view the fact that the islander to be deported is undoubtedly entitled to a passage from Australia to his native island without any cost to himself, the liability for any increase in such cost over and above the amount already deposited by the original employer towards defraying the same will become a matter to be settled between the last employer and the Deporting Authority.

Any proposed scheme to deport the Pacific Islanders *enmasse* to island depôts, whence they could be distributed by means of auxiliary boats and under the supervision of individuals not exclusively responsible to the Deporting Authority, would not, in our opinion, be consistent with the spirit of the original contract, and would be inconsistent with a due regard to an honourable compliance with the responsibilities devolving upon this State.

It is conceivable that, under such a procedure, undue influence might be used to induce an islander to waive or postpone the condition entitling him to be returned to his "passage," and that under such circumstances his services might be retained for an indefinite period at a place other than his own home, thus rendering it impossible, or at least impracticable, for the Deporting Authority to assure itself that he is ever returned to his own "passage," and that the obligation which this State entered into with the islander is discharged.

The Legislature having decided compulsory deportation to be in the interests of the Commonwealth as a whole, we assume that the total cost of deportation and the expenses incidental thereto will be borne by the Commonwealth Government, and will thus become a charge upon the States *pro rata* on a population basis; this State handing over to the Commonwealth Government any balance in hand to the credit of the Pacific Islanders' Trust Fund, less such amounts as may be then held in respect of islanders now or hereafter to be exempted and such refunds on account of deceased islanders as may be then due.

Repatriation under the conditions which will obtain after 31st December, 1906, will necessitate two processes, viz.—

- (a) The care of the Pacific Islander after that date, and when his plantation home will no longer afford him a refuge; and
- (b) The shipment of the Pacific Islander to his native home.

Our recommendations will deal with the practical aspect of such a system of dealing with the islanders, the cost of which we estimate at £53,154. (*Vide* Appendix XXI.)

The only course open by means of which to avoid the serious danger certain to follow the collection of Pacific Islanders, natives of different islands, in the proximity of towns or elsewhere in large numbers not under official control, appears to be as follows:—

After it has been determined which, if any, of these men, for one or other of the reasons hereinbefore specified, are exempted or to be exempted from deportation, and such persons having been provided with certificates of exemption, then to assemble into depôts, to be formed, all Pacific Islanders liable to be deported.

There being at present only two vessels engaged in returning islanders, it is clear that these cannot cope with the numbers to be repatriated.

As the repatriation of the islanders is of itself a business too limited to create competition amongst shipowners for their transport, we are of opinion that special arrangements will be necessary. Such arrangements might, with advantage, be confined to individuals possessed of previous experience of the islands, this being a factor bearing on the cost of deportation.

After searching inquiries, and having regard to the expenses, other than passage money, incidental to deportation, we are of opinion that, with a view to facilitating repatriation within a reasonable time and at a minimum cost, it will be found advisable to utilise steam vessels as transports.

During the time that Pacific Islanders were being recruited, the cost of passages for returning islanders varied from £3 10s. to £5 per head. Since the cessation of recruiting, the cost of return passages has been increased to £7 per head. We are of opinion that one of the causes of this increased rate is the fact that avoidable delays have, in the past, occurred in obtaining return passengers even approximating the number which ships were licensed to carry. These delays arose—

- (a) Owing to the fact that vessels have in the past mainly sailed only from Maryborough and Bundaberg. This entailed upon islanders not resident in those districts the necessity of incurring the cost of coastal fares to these two ports, which expenditure they were often either unable or unwilling to bear;
- (b) A second reason for delay was that the dates of departure of vessels were not always known to the Inspectors of Pacific Islanders in the Northern parts of the State in sufficient time to enable them to apprise the islanders, and thus afford the latter an opportunity of preparing to return. (This lack of timely information is a main cause of the continuance of so many unemployed islanders in the State.)

We conclude that the reason ships did not more frequently take their departure from Northern ports is partly due to the existence of a departmental instruction making it compulsory for licensed vessels to be surveyed only by an officer from the head office of the Marine Department at Brisbane. As this survey is required to be made before every voyage, and at the expense of the ship, the amount of the cost and the resultant delay in securing the survey have, to a great extent, prevented vessels from taking their departure from a Northern port.

If better and more systematic facilities are provided than have obtained in the past, we anticipate that, owing to the increased number of islanders who will be awaiting shipment, and as to whom no delay should occur in their embarkation, the cost of return passages should be considerably reduced.

Incidental to the cost of deportation is the expense of collecting and maintaining islanders pending embarkation. The approximate amount of that expenditure will be dealt with in our recommendations. [*Vide* Appendix XXI.]

We draw attention to the fact that in the past many islanders have, while out of employment, unnecessarily expended their savings in such a manner as to leave them without the means of purchasing the usual outfit; and, as many of them are loath to return without being possessed of an outfit, we propose to make a recommendation which will have the effect of preventing at least such islanders as have Savings Bank accounts from wholly depleting the same.

As regards the position of the islander upon his return to his native island, a large amount of evidence was given upon the subject of the probable sufficiency or otherwise of the food supply to meet the requirements of repatriated islanders, especially in the case of the Island of Malayta. In the absence of warnings on this point from the Resident Commissioners of the various groups, who are aware of the approaching deportation, it may be argued that there is no ground for apprehension. This matter will be found to have been dealt with in our recommendations.

4. WHETHER SUFFICIENT LABOUR FOR CARRYING ON THE QUEENSLAND SUGAR INDUSTRY IS LIKELY TO BE AVAILABLE IN QUEENSLAND WHEN PACIFIC ISLANDERS CAN NO LONGER BE LAWFULLY EMPLOYED, AND, IF SUFFICIENT LABOUR FOR SUCH PURPOSE IS NOT LIKELY TO BE LOCALLY OBTAINABLE, THE BEST MEANS OF SUPPLYING THE DEFICIENCY.

Until our arrival in the far Northern districts of Queensland we had no opportunity of coming into contact with many farmers or workers on the land of lengthy experience in that part of the State.

Since the opportunity was afforded us of visiting these districts, of hearing the views of such residents, and of generally observing the surroundings, we feel it our duty to point out that, unfortunately as it appears to us, the accounts which have from time to time been circulated in the Southern parts of Australia as to the conditions of living in the North of Queensland have been far from reliable and in many instances misleading.

Approaching first the subject as to "whether sufficient labour for carrying on the sugar industry is likely to be available in Queensland when Pacific Islanders may no longer be lawfully employed," we conclude—

- (a) That there exists amongst those interested no apprehension of danger of a shortage in the supply of labour for cane cultivation or manufacture in that part of Queensland south of Rockhampton (viz., Nos. 3 and 4 Districts) either at present or in the near future, notwithstanding the fact that after 31st December next Pacific Islanders cannot be employed for that purpose.
- (b) Taking as next in order the opinions expressed as to the future sufficiency of the labour supply in No. 2 District (Mackay, Proserpine, and Ayr), we find that there is practically no fear entertained for the present year. But fears concerning the position to obtain in future years were expressed, based, as it appeared to us, upon an absence of reliable information as to the number of suitable labourers likely to be available in the Commonwealth generally. We observed that in this district the industry is being carried on to an increasing extent on smaller holdings. This condition of affairs has obtained in the Proserpine sub-district since the commencement of sugar-growing there. In the Mackay sub-district, where other conditions previously obtained, the transition from large to small holdings has been on an increasing scale for many years, and is still continuing. In the Ayr sub-district a similar change, lately initiated, is also taking place. This change in the system tends towards a solution of the labour problem.
- (c) It was in No. 1 District (Ingham, Geraldton, Cairns, and Mossman) that fears were most freely expressed as to a sufficient supply of labour in the future. But, even here, we found no serious apprehension entertained as regards the current year, arrangements having already in the month of May been made for practically all the extra labour judged necessary for the coming harvest. Some men had been engaged locally, and others from the Southern portion of this State and from New South Wales. The commendable forethought displayed in thus making timely provision for the altered conditions is well worthy of imitation. The system of smaller holdings, to which we have already referred, is also being introduced into this district, and will, no doubt, be extended.

Being from its geographical position to a certain extent isolated, and the expense of reaching it being heavy, No. 1 District is peculiarly situated in its

relation to the labour market; and there having been hitherto in this district but a moderate registration of cane for the sugar bounty, European labour has not been attracted thither to the same extent as has elsewhere been the case.

Neither has the same attention been extended to making available for close settlement Crown lands in this District, as has been given in the more Southern portion of the State; and this absence of inducement to settle on the land has in the past been an undoubted factor in depriving the District of a fuller permanent local supply of European labour.

In view of the fact that it was this year there considered necessary to introduce labourers for harvesting operations from the Southern part of this State and from New South Wales, and having regard particularly to the absence of reliable information as to unemployed surplus labour available in Queensland, a great deal of uncertainty exists as to whether a sufficient supply of labour will be available in this District when Pacific Islanders can no longer be lawfully employed.

The same remarks apply also to No. 2 District, though to a lesser extent.

Districts Nos. 3 and 4 will without doubt have abundance of European labour from which to select.

A perusal of the evidence will disclose frequent complaints of the unreliability of a proportion of the casual European labour offering. Whatever unreliability exists appears to be mainly due to intemperance, although among the labourers there are to be found in this as in other industries a percentage of the aged, infirm, and otherwise unfit.

With the advancement and closer settlement of sugar districts, and the consequent improved social conditions, it may confidently be hoped that whatever amount of intemperance now prevails will be greatly reduced. At some mills the establishment of reading-rooms, combined with means of recreation, has proved beneficial as providing counter attractions to the immoderate use of alcohol.

The inauguration at certain centres of a system of payment of wages in cash, and of a means whereby employees are enabled to deposit in, or make remittances through, the Government Savings Bank has also proved of great value.

We conclude from the evidence received that the quality of the accommodation and food provided is an important factor in attracting and retaining labour of the best class; and the consensus of opinion of workers was in favour of receiving a wage together with board, rather than a higher rate of payment out of which they had to "find themselves," a practice which obtains in a few localities.

From well-nigh unanimous evidence given before the Commission it is clear that any uncertainty as to an adequate supply of labour in the sugar industry could be greatly minimised were it possible to provide facilities for settlement upon small holdings of such workers as would be inclined to avail themselves thereof within or adjacent to sugar districts.

The absence of a thoroughly organised Labour Intelligence Bureau is undoubtedly one of the causes of the want of knowledge and consequent fears as to the supply and demand of labour generally. We instance, in support of this opinion, the establishment at Charters Towers of a body known as the Unemployed Workers' Association, specially established for the purpose of finding work in the sugar industry. This association has been organised, notwithstanding the existence of a branch of the Government Labour Bureau in the same centre, and, according to the officer in charge of the latter, is doing good work. In making this reference we particularly desire to cast no reflection upon this officer, as the extent to which the Government Labour Bureau there is availed of by both employer and worker is but typical of the inutility of branches at many other centres visited by us. (*Vide* Questions 13330 to 13339—evidence of Clerk of Petty Sessions, Charters Towers.)

RECOMMENDATIONS.

PACIFIC ISLANDERS.

Upon the whole subject-matter of our inquiry we have the honour to recommend—

- (1) That the Resident Commissioners in the various Groups be forthwith requested to use every endeavour to acquaint the native chiefs that the islanders now in Queensland may be shortly returning in large numbers, so that, if necessary, increased food supplies may be provided for by increased plantings.
- (2) That authority and instructions be given by the Deporting Authority to Government agents, subject to the approval of the Resident Commissioner, to allow any deported islander who does not wish to return to his own home to land at some "passage" or place other than that from which he was originally deported.
- (3) That to facilitate an early voluntary exodus of Pacific Islanders, and thus reduce the expenditure incidental to repatriation after 1st January, 1907, it be an instruction to Inspectors of Pacific Islanders to forthwith procure the names of islanders desirous of returning within the next six months and to immediately communicate the same to the Officer in Charge of Pacific Island Labour in order that provision may be made for the speedy repatriation of any such islanders. To make certain that Pacific Islanders should be thoroughly assured that deportation is intended, the local Inspectors of Pacific Islanders should be instructed to make the fact known amongst the islanders in each district.
- (4) That in case such islanders are non-resident within walking distance of the port of embarkation, the Department pay the cost of coastal fare, obtaining from the islander an assignment of his claim on whosoever may be by law liable to pay the same.
- (5) That legislation be provided clearly defining the status of Pacific Islanders engaged in the pearl-shell and bêche-de-mer fisheries, natives of New Caledonia, of the Loyalty Group, and of Fiji.
- (6) That the following be exempted from compulsory deportation:—

Any Pacific Islander who shall prove to the satisfaction of an officer authorised by the Deporting Authority—

- (a) That he was introduced into Australia prior to 1st September, 1879;
- (b) That he is of such extreme age, or is suffering from such bodily infirmity as to be unable to obtain a livelihood if returned to his native island;
- (c) That being married to, or living as man and wife with, a native of some island other than his own, he cannot be deported without risk to the life of either himself or his family;
- (d) That he is married to, or living as man and wife with, a female not a native of the Pacific Islands;
- (e) That he has offspring who have been educated in State schools;
- (f) That he was on 1st July, 1906, and still is, registered as the beneficial owner of a freehold in Queensland;
- (g) That he is the holder of an unexpired leasehold, compensation for the relinquishment of which has not been paid to him, as provided either by the provisions of the lease or by law; or
- (h) That he has been continuously resident in Australia for a period of not less than twenty years prior to 31st December, 1906.

Holding that it is impracticable to repatriate simultaneously the whole of the Pacific Islanders now in Queensland, who will be liable to be deported, we *recommend*—

- (7) That, in order to assure a suitable distribution of islanders throughout the various islands, selection for deportation should be made of such a proportionate number of the natives of each island as it is considered can be there absorbed with the least degree of interference with economic conditions. (Reference to Appendices XVIII. and XIX. will demonstrate the practicableness of the making of such a selection.)

Under a proper system of selection it would be possible to embark for repatriation 2,000 islanders early in the month of January, 1907. We *recommend*—

- (8) That officers of special qualifications be detailed both for the collection of the islanders to be thus deported as well as of those to be placed in the dépôts hereinafter referred to.
- (9) That steamers to accommodate up to 500 islanders each be employed as transports. It is indispensable, in order to efficiently carry out the repatriation, that all preparatory organisation in its minutest details be completed before the end of the current year.

As regards the balance of the islanders who will not thus leave Queensland in the month of January, 1907, we *recommend*—

- (10) That if the Deporting Authority are satisfied by evidence, as the result of investigations, that the repatriations effected in the month of January have not seriously interfered with the economic conditions existing in the various islands, and that immediate further repatriations can be effected consistently with a humane regard to the interests of the islanders, further deportations shall be at the rate of about 500 per month after the return of the first transport.

- (11) That legislation be introduced—

- (a) For the establishment of dépôts upon lines similar to those laid down for reserves under the Aborigines Protection, etc., Acts (Queensland). [*Vide* Appendix XX];
- (b) Making it compulsory upon Pacific Islanders, who have not before 31st December, 1906, received certificates of exemption, to immediately after that date present themselves at the nearest police station, there to receive instructions as to their future action; and also making it compulsory upon an islander to follow the instructions there given to him;
- (c) Providing that all islanders so presenting themselves shall (their names, islands, and the ships in which they arrived in Queensland having been taken) then receive a badge or ticket; and that thereafter any islander found beyond the limits of a dépôt, and not being in personal possession of the said badge or ticket, or of a certificate of exemption, shall be removed to a dépôt;
- (d) Prohibiting a Pacific Islander remaining in the State after 31st December, 1906, and liable to deportation, from operating on his Savings Bank account after that date so as to reduce the credit balance of that account below the sum of ten pounds (£10) sterling until such time as he is about to embark;
- (e) Providing that, during the existence of the proclamation of such dépôts, no new licensed victuallers' licenses be granted within five (5) miles of any of such dépôts;
- (f) Providing for the compensation of Pacific Islanders who are leaseholders and who are deported during the currency of their leases;
- (g) To give effect before 1st January, 1907, to such, if any, of these recommendations as may be adopted.

FUTURE SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

With regard to the supply of labour after the withdrawal of Pacific Islanders, we recommend :—

- (12) That there be established a Labour Intelligence Bureau, with branches in every populous centre, where reliable information may always be obtainable regarding the demand for and supply of labour. That statistical information be regularly interchanged between branches through the central bureau. That provision be made for allowing the bureau officers to become the agent of either employer or employee in making contracts for employment.
- (13) That in the more populous centres the branches of the bureau and the officials in charge should be separate from the sub-department issuing relief.
- (14) That the restriction against unemployed making temporary use of immigration depôts, where such exist, for the purposes of camping, be removed, subject to suitable regulations.
- (15) That all applications to the bureau should be made to the nearest branch.
- (16) That more facilities be given to enable deposits to be made in, and remittances transmitted through, the Government Savings Bank at sugar-mills and other centres in sugar districts—
 - (a) By the establishment of complete branches where population warrants the same;
 - (b) By providing the attendance of an officer periodically, especially on pay-days, to only receive deposits and amounts to be remitted.
- (17) That where Crown lands suitable for close settlement exist within or adjacent to sugar districts, the same should be made available in relatively small holdings for occupation by workers of limited means.
- (18) That during the next six months efforts be made to ascertain the probable number of unemployed within the State and in the States of New South Wales and Victoria, and to bring under the notice of such workers the nature of the employment offering, and the conditions obtaining both in the sugar industry and as to land settlement in Queensland.
- (19) That if, as a result of such inquiries and representations, no sufficient surplus labour of a suitable character appears to exist, or if existent, is not likely to be attracted to the sugar districts, information be disseminated in the United Kingdom and the Continent of Europe as to conditions obtaining in the sugar industry and as to facilities for land settlement, with a view to attracting immigrants. (These may, however, require aid in the matter of passage-money in the first instance.)

In conclusion, your Commissioners desire to cordially acknowledge the courtesy with which the officers of the Public Service have supplied your Commissioners with necessary information and documents respecting the subject of their inquiries; the efficient and expeditious manner in which the Government Printing Office staff have performed their work; and to record their high appreciation of the zeal and efficiency with which Messrs. Brennan and Bird, Secretary and Assistant Secretary respectively to the Commission, have discharged their arduous duties.

R. A. RANKING, Chairman.

W. T. PAGET.

CHAS. F. NIELSON.

Dated this 30th day of June, 1906.

RIDER No. 1.

I desire to add the following Rider to the foregoing Report :—

In view of the high cost attaching to a comprehensive scheme such as that contained in the "Depôts Recommendation," I recommend that the Deporting Authority consider, as an alternative, the advisability of allowing Pacific Islanders, who may be liable to deportation, to work under agreement, after 1st January, 1907, for employers engaged in tropical or semi-tropical agriculture, until such time as transport facilities are afforded.

Such agreements to be made only under a similar provision to that contained in the second paragraph of Regulation No. 2 (Queensland), made 25th February, 1896.

Should this alternative scheme be adopted, it would, in my opinion, result in a very much smaller amount being spent on the deportation of the islanders, and would also allow them to continue as wage-earners almost up to the time of their leaving the State, thus placing them in a better position to purchase such effects as they desire to take with them to their native homes, while it would not interfere with the carrying on of the sugar industry by white labour after the 1st January, 1907.

W. T. PAGET.

RIDER No. 2.

I desire to add the following Rider :—

1. PACIFIC ISLANDERS LIABLE TO BE DEPORTED.

Regarding the existence of a large number of unemployed Pacific Islanders in Queensland (most of whom are liable to be deported), referred to in the Report, I recommend—

That the Commonwealth Government be officially apprised of this fact, and requested to cause administrative action to be taken under section 8 of *Pacific Island Labourers Act*, 1901 (Commonwealth).

2. PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS IN QUEENSLAND WHOSE DEPORTATION WOULD BE INCONSISTENT WITH HUMANITY OR WITH GOOD FAITH.

I dissent from Recommendation 6 (h). The fixing of any limit of time of residence in Australia is, in my opinion, of too general a nature, and too unsound in principle, to be applicable to framing a classification of exemptions under a scheme for deportation. I am further of opinion that Recommendation 6 (a) to (g), inclusive, covers practically the whole of the islanders who come under the above heading. It is, of course, possible that there are a few islanders not covered by the lastmentioned paragraphs, and to deport whom would be a hardship; but such are, in my opinion, fully protected by the discretionary nature of the Statute. All such cases would not necessarily be covered by Recommendation 6 (h).

3. REPATRIATION.

In the last paragraph under this heading in the Report will be found a reference to the probable food supply on the islands, particularly the island of Malayta. I am not satisfied that the evidence received on this question is convincing. I feel it my duty to point out that, in my opinion, most of the evidence tendered with a view of showing the probability of islanders (particularly Malaytans) being in danger of not being able to obtain sufficient food on their return should be largely discounted, because—

- (a) No European witness who has any knowledge of the interior of this island presented himself before the Commission; and the greater portion of the Malaytans now in Queensland belong to inland tribes;

- (b) Most of the European witnesses who testified as to the probability of such a shortage spoke merely from hearsay. Those who testified from their personal knowledge referred only to certain localities on the sea coast of Malayta;
- (c) Some of the European witnesses last referred to are pecuniarily interested in either the retention of or delay in the repatriation of islanders.

In addition to the above, the Malaytan islanders themselves, when interrogated on this question, invariably contradicted any suggestion of the probability of any danger existing in the matter of food supply.

Every witness who gave evidence on the point testified as to the general great fertility of this island.

There is also evidence that there is at present a considerable demand for island labour outside of Australia, and thus islanders, when returned, will have opportunity of getting employment should they so desire.

I attach great importance to the fact that neither of the Resident Commissioners of the islands, who are undoubtedly aware that large numbers of islanders may be shortly returned, have warned the Australian authorities against any danger as to insufficiency of food supply for returning islanders. Such warnings would without doubt have been given had either of the Commissioners entertained the slightest fear on this subject.

There is still adequate time before the 31st December next to make full inquiries and obtain reliable information on this subject, and this I advise should be done.

Should the information thus obtained satisfy the Deporting Authority that the islanders will incur no risk of a shortage of supply of food on their return, repatriation can then be carried on at a rate numerically greater than that suggested in Recommendation 10 of the Report, thus considerably lessening the whole cost under this heading.

4. WHETHER SUFFICIENT LABOUR FOR CARRYING ON THE QUEENSLAND SUGAR INDUSTRY IS LIKELY TO BE AVAILABLE, ETC.

The uneven distribution of the available white labour in Queensland is most marked. In the Southern districts, and particularly in the more populous thereof, there is evidently a surplus. Reasons are given in the Report as to why European labour has not been extensively attracted to the No. 1 District.

I conclude from inquiries that a prevalent idea existed in the minds of many sugar-growers in this district—until, at any rate, quite recently—that Pacific Island labour would not be withdrawn from the industry. This may account to some extent for the moderate area registered for bounty in the district prior to this year.

Whatever difficulty the change decided upon in connection with the labour conditions in the industry may have entailed upon employers, that difficulty has been intensified by their neglect to earlier and more gradually substitute other labourers to take the place of Pacific Islanders.

During the harvesting season a very much larger number of men is employed than during the remainder of the year. Many of these will, doubtless, be induced to return in succeeding seasons; but the industry, as well as the men themselves, would be in a much better position if they could be kept continuously in or near the sugar districts. The large areas of land not being utilised by the owners, and available only at prohibitive prices, retard close settlement in this district.

I also desire to add a further recommendation under this heading—

That provision be made for the licensing of private registry employment offices under regulations requiring statistical information to be periodically furnished to the Labour Intelligence Bureau.

CHAS. F. NIELSON.

1906.
QUEENSLAND.

SUGAR INDUSTRY LABOUR COMMISSION.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

TAKEN BEFORE

THE ROYAL COMMISSION

APPOINTED TO

Inquire into and Report regarding the Number of Pacific Islanders to be Deported from Queensland at the end of the Current Year, the most efficient manner of Repatriating them, with the probable Cost thereof; whether there are in Queensland any Pacific Islanders whose Deportation would be inconsistent with humanity or with good faith; and whether Sufficient Labour for carrying on the Queensland Sugar Industry is likely to be available when Pacific Islanders can no longer be lawfully employed, and, if sufficient labour for such purpose is not likely to be locally obtainable, the best means of supplying the deficiency.

(Bundaberg.)

TUESDAY, 3 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT :

Mr. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) |

Mr. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

THOMAS WILSON WALKER, Cane Farmer and Hon. Secretary, Woongarra Cane Growers and Farmers' Association, examined :

1. *By the Chairman* : What are you ? A dairyman and cane contractor.
2. How long have you been cutting cane by contract ? Not to any great extent till last season, but I was doing it in a small way two seasons before.
3. What average number of men did you employ ? Twenty-five.
4. *By Mr. Paget* : Were they employed in one gang, or in two or three gangs ? In one gang.
5. *By the Chairman* : Were they Europeans ? All white men.
6. Were they all paid the same rate of wages ? They were all engaged at the same rate—25s. a week and found.
7. Was there any alteration in the rate ? No. When some of them showed special merit, I recognised it at the end of the season by a bonus.
8. The actual wages were limited to 25s. a week ? Yes.
9. What sort of accommodation were you able to find for them ? I was working in two or three different places. At the first place good accommodation was provided by the planter for whom I was cutting. At the second place I had to provide tents, as there was no accommodation; and at the third place the men found camps where they could in sheds.

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10. Do you make a practice of finding tents for them if there are no buildings available? Yes. At the last place I was at it was only a question of three weeks' work, and the men were satisfied with the accommodation they got; but, when it was likely to last any time, I found the tents.
11. What kind of tents were they—like those used by road gangs? Just ordinary 8 x 10 tents.
12. Did you provide a mess cook for the men? Yes.
13. What was your experience of the class of labour offering for cane-cutting? I carried through my contracts satisfactorily, but there were men coming and going. There were dozens of men who worked a couple of days and then went away.
14. Did any of your gang work right through the season? Some of them did.
15. Approximately, what proportion? Four went right through the season, but there was a gap between two contracts for a week, and some of them had to go.
16. Did they do the work to your satisfaction and to the satisfaction of the growers of the cane? Yes.
17. What were the reasons for the men leaving? Some of them left because they got their hands hurt trashing. They worked for a day and a half, and got their hands cut by the cane leaves, and they could not stand it. Others left without giving any reason. Two men worked for a day, did not go out the next morning, and came for their money at dinner-time. There was another class of men who would get an advance on their wages of £1 on a Saturday night, come into town and get on the spree, come back on Monday morning for the balance of their money, and that would be the end of them.
18. Did any of them complain of the work being unduly arduous? Not to my knowledge.
19. During what months were you working? From 17th July to 1st November.
20. When does the season close in this district? It depends on the season and on the crops. We expect to have a long season this year. Last year some of them were finished in October, and some of them ran on to the end of November.
21. Did any of them run to Christmas or after Christmas? They have not done that in this locality for several years.
22. By Mr. Paget: With the crop showing at the present time, you expect the cutting will last till Christmas this year? Yes.
23. Last year, and for one or two previous years, the harvesting did not last till the hottest part of the year? Of course it is pretty hot in November.
24. But you say that it only lasted till the 1st November last year? Well, I anticipate it will run well into November this year. We have not had a proper season for a good number of years.
25. By the Chairman: Have you done any of this work yourself? I was working with my men last year.
26. Did you find it an excessive strain? It is pretty hard work, but I was brought up to quill-driving and not to manual labour.
27. Still you were able to work with the men? Yes; some of them were better than I was, but I could keep up with the average man.
28. Had you any difficulty in filling vacancies in your gang? Not often. Last season there were generally men coming round looking for work.
29. Had you ever occasion to apply to the Labour Bureau for men? At the beginning of the season I applied to them.
30. Did you get men from them? Yes; about twice as many men came out as I required.
31. You were able to pick and choose? I could not tell a good man by merely looking at him, but I picked the men I thought would suit me best.
32. By Mr. Paget: What is the average quantity of cane which can be cut and loaded per man per day? It depends on whether you are loading on drays or trams. The first contract I had was for about 50 acres, which went about 17 tons to the acre. Including tram-shifters, my men averaged 2 tons 3 cwt. a day.
33. You paid the tram-shifters? I had to put the tram down and pick it up again.
34. Did your contract cover the haulage from the field to the main line? No; my work was done when the trucks were loaded. With drays they did a little more.
35. Had you very much dray work? Between 30 and 40 acres. I do not remember the exact tonnage, but it was quite 2½ tons.
36. Were you paid a better price for loading on to trams with a tram-shifter than for loading on to drays? Yes. The price for tram work is worth 6d. a ton more, in my opinion.
37. Were you paid 6d. more? It is a different class of cane, and I cannot compare the two things.
38. A lighter crop? Yes.
39. By Mr. Nielson: Were there not plenty men available about Bundaberg last year? Plenty of men, but they were not all suitable for field work.
40. What class of men are the best, with regard to age? The best man in my gang was about sixty years of age, but he was an exception. I had them from nineteen years of age and upwards; but I should say that the best age is from twenty-five to thirty-five years.
41. Have you had any experience in harvesting cane with kanaka labour? No.
42. By Mr. Paget: Or with any other coloured labour? No.
43. By Mr. Nielson: Did you lose much time last year in looking for men? No. I lost perhaps two or three days during the whole season. Men were always coming along. In fact, if a man went into town and did not want to come back, he sometimes sent a man whom he met to take his place.
44. The roads were full of men last season? Not towards the end of the season. There were plenty of men at the beginning of the season.
45. Do you think the Labour Bureau, as at present constituted, is sufficient to serve the interests of both employers and employees with regard to the supply of labour? I am not competent to give an opinion on that point. All that I had to do with the bureau last season was when I sent them a letter telling them I was contracting for cane, and asking them to send me men. They sent out a number of men, and I chose what I wanted.
46. Do you think a well-organised bureau would be of assistance? It would be very handy, especially where work is likely to be plentiful, if a man knew where he could pick up labour without having to hunt round for it.
47. By the Chairman: You have never had experience in working Polynesians? I have worked Polynesian labour, but not in connection with harvesting; and it is ten years since I had anything to do with that class of labour. I never had very much to do with it.

48. *By Mr. Paget*: With your experience of contracting for harvesting during the last two years, are you thinking of continuing such work after the termination of Polynesian labour? Yes. I am taking up a larger contract this year with white labour.

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49. *By Mr. Nielson*: Was that 17-ton crop a fair average of your cane-cutting contracts last year? No. There was another lot I had which averaged about 12 tons for 68 acres. That was burnt cane.

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50. Was the 17 tons the best crop? It was about the best crop. Some of it went a long way more than that, but 17 tons was the average.

51. What would be a reasonable rate to contract for cutting a 17-ton crop, trashed and untrashed? Men on untrashed cane will cut and load 2 tons 8 cwt a day per man, including all hands. They can do that without being driven, and some men can do a great deal more. Although the men I employ were picked indiscriminately, they cut an average of 2 tons 8 cwt. per day, and they were not driven at all.

52. *By Mr. Paget*: The crops you contracted for were untrashed? Yes.

53. *By the Chairman*: You spoke of men hurting their hands when trashing—Have any means been devised by which a man can save his hands? No. The leaves of the cane get between their fingers and cut their hands unless they wear some sort of gloves. I am trying to devise something this year.

54. Do you think it is possible to devise something? It may be possible. I have seen some Hindoos using a bag round their arms and tied round their shoulders to protect their hands and arms.

55. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you not use trashing-hooks? No. It must be done by hand to be effective.

56. *By Mr. Nielson*: You say you pay 25s. a week and find the men in everything, including tents? Yes, when tents are wanted.

57. Had you any difficulty in obtaining men at that rate? No. I was never stuck for an hour last season so far as labour was concerned.

58. What did it cost per week, on an average, to feed the men? About 11s.

59. *By Mr. Paget*: Did that include the cost of the mess cook? Yes.

60. *By Mr. Nielson*: What is the cost of trashing cane? One shilling a ton.

61. Did you get that for trashing? Last year I trashed a small piece, and the planter allowed me 1s. a ton extra.

62. *By the Chairman*: Do you mean by that that a man would trash for 1s. per ton? No, I would not trash for 1s. per ton. Some say they can do it, but I would not trash for 1s. per ton.

63. Have you ever formed any idea what it would cost? I tried a little bit at the beginning of the year, and it cost me 1s. 4d.

64. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are you conversant with the Shearers and Sugar Workers Accommodation Act? Yes, I read it.

65. Now, do you think men will prefer to camp in tents in some places? I am sure of it. There are a lot of these barracks that get infested with "visitors," and men would sooner camp in clean tents than barracks.

66. *By the Chairman*: Assuming that these barracks were kept clean and under the charge of a room steward, which would they prefer? I do not know which they would prefer.

67. You think they would prefer tents? I think they would; but I would not prefer a tent myself.

68. Would you have a mess-tent in that case? Yes. There is a dining-tent.

69. *By Mr. Nielson*: What hours do you work during the season? From 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., with one hour for dinner and a quarter of an hour in the afternoon. They get a little more than an hour for dinner, as they knock off at 12 and leave camp at 1 o'clock, so they get about an hour and a quarter for dinner. We knock off at 4 o'clock on Saturdays.

70. *By the Chairman*: How many hours a day do they work? Ten hours a day actual working, with the exception of Saturdays.

71. *By Mr. Nielson*: With five meals a day? Yes, five meals a day.

72. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you tell us how much of the work was harvested by contract last year? Yes; I suppose about half the white-grown cane was harvested by contract last year.

73. By family labour? All the men who have only a few acres do the harvesting themselves. They sometimes take in a few men to help them.

74. It is done by family labour? Yes. At least half the cane is cut by contract.

75. Taking into consideration the large crop there is throughout the State this year, do you anticipate any shortage of white labour next season? Unless a great many more men come here this year than were here last year, we must be short. There were certainly not enough men last year to harvest the present area.

76. And there really seemed to be a surplus of labour last year? I do not believe there was a surplus of good labour, although there was a surplus of men.

77. *By Mr. Nielson*: All the mills were kept going last year to their full capacity? Yes, except after pay-day. Most of them had a break on pay-day.

78. They were kept going to their full capacity? Yes.

79. It would mean that the crushing season would extend for a longer period if a larger area had to be harvested, as you say the mills were going to their full capacity? Some of the mills could have worked fuller time than they did, and they could have worked a longer time.

80. *By Mr. Paget*: Then they were not working at their full capacity? No; they used to be working up till 9 o'clock at night in a full season, but they did not do it this year.

81. *By Mr. Nielson*: Some of the mills worked all night? Yes, some did.

82. *By the Chairman*: If the labour were available they would work both shifts? The mills are not all carried on in the same way. The sugar-working mills all work both shifts.

83. Can you suggest anything that you have not told us now that it would be to our advantage to learn? Well, if there would be some arrangement whereby employers could tell the difference between a good man and a bad man by establishing a system of certificates, it would be an improvement.

84. Last year you did not adopt any system of giving a written discharge? No, I did not.

85. You are aware that such a thing is in existence in the pastoral industry? I have heard that it is so, but I do not know myself.

86. You think it would be advantageous to adopt that system? Yes. If a man came to me for employment, and he had a ticket showing that he had worked for a certain number of months at a certain place, then I would know he was a good man. Some men come, and you do not know what they are like

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- until they have been with you for a few days. These men just work for a little while and then go. If there is plenty of labour it is all right; but if you are stuck for labour you will suffer by it if a man only remains a short time and then leaves you. If a system were adopted that an employer could give a man a certificate after he had worked for a certain time for him, it would be a good thing; and if he could add to it that he was a good worker it would be all the better.
87. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think it should be compulsory by law? It would not do any harm, and it would do a lot of good.
88. *By Mr. Paget*: Could not a system be arranged between the employers and the officials of the Sugar Workers' Union, for instance, as I believe there is a Sugar Workers' Union in existence? I have seen a notice that they are forming a union, but I have not come into contact with it yet.
89. Such an arrangement could be come to, could it not? It would be to the interest of good working men if it were done. I do not think anyone would object to it. It is only the loafer who would object.
90. *By Mr. Nielson*: It would not be a bad idea to have a certificate with regard to employers in the same way? To see if they are good employers?
91. Yes? It would be a good thing.

ANGUS NIELSON DAHL, Farmer, residing at Woongarra, examined:

A. N. Dahl.

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92. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A farmer.
93. What area have you under cultivation? Fifty acres.
94. What do you grow? Sugar-cane.
95. What class of labour do you employ? Chiefly my own family at the present time.
96. What area did you harvest last year? Thirty-five acres.
97. Do you know what tonnage you got from that? I cannot say the tonnage per acre, but the whole amounted to 300 tons.
98. *By Mr. Paget*: About 9 tons to the acre? Yes.
99. *By the Chairman*: You had assistance to cut that? Yes.
100. What did you pay for that assistance? I paid £1 a week and rations, and also £1 5s. and rations.
101. Did they have to trash? Some of the cane was trashed and some was not.
102. Had you any difficulty in getting labour? No; I did not have any difficulty.
103. Were the men you employed residents of the locality, or strangers? They were strangers.
104. Did they work throughout the job with you? Some of them did not, but some of them did.
105. Those who gave it up, did they give a reason for giving it up? I sacked them.
106. They could not do the work? No; I had little lads who could do more work than they could.
107. Your own sons? Yes; I told them that if they could keep up with the lads I would keep them on, but if they could not they would not suit me, and they could not.
108. What aged men were they? One was twenty-two, and the other about twenty-seven.
109. You had no difficulty in getting what men you wanted? No difficulty.
110. What sort of crop do you hope for this year? A very good one.
111. Heavier than last year? Yes.
112. And you do not anticipate any difficulty in getting labour? No.
113. When you employ men, do you house them? Yes; and they eat at the same table as I do myself.
114. With your family? Yes.
115. Have you heard complaints that this class of labour is too hard? I have never heard good, reliable men complain about it, but I have heard a lot of those men who knock about street corners talk about it. I have had men from Denmark come out here, and I put them at the same work with the kanakas, and in two or three days they were better than the kanakas.
116. And did they keep that up? Yes.
117. You know all about hard work? I have always done hard work myself.
118. Have you ever done any other work besides farming, such as well-sinking? Yes, I have done well-sinking, loading ballast, quarrying, and have used a short-handled shovel in labouring work.
119. How does that work compare with cane-cutting—Which is the harder? Loading ballast and quarrying is harder than cane-cutting.
120. I suppose you can get used to cane-cutting? Cane-cutting is not the easiest job on a farm; but you can get used to it; at any rate, quarrying is harder.
121. What is it that is hard—the stooping? Yes; the stooping is hard, but it is all right once you get into it. You want to study your men as well as yourself, and see that they cut the cane where the breeze comes from.
122. *By Mr. Paget*: Especially if you are working with them? Yes; we have not got the same trouble as the big plantations.
123. In the event of thousands of kanakas being deported this year would you anticipate any difficulty in getting sufficient labour to harvest your crop? I think it would be very difficult to get sufficient labour, according to the labour that is now about.
124. You quite understand that the kanakas now in this State are working in the sugar industry, and if they are deported their places will have to be filled? That is why I say we will be short of labour.
125. *By the Chairman*: You think a good number of these good men will be absorbed by others, and there will be competitors for their labour, and someone will have to go short? Yes.
126. Can you suggest any scheme for getting over that? Immigration from the old countries, and getting out a class of men who are accustomed to working on farms. I have had great experience of employing labour that came out from the old country, and I have had fellows who did not know a cross-cut saw from an axe, and no matter what tool was given to them they did not know how to catch hold of it. I have had other men here from the old country. I have put them into the cane-field straight away, and they could cut cane with any kanaka.
127. Did they suffer at first at all? No; neither the heat nor anything else troubled them.
128. What countries do you refer to as the best places for drawing this labour? I refer to Denmark, Sweden, and Germany.
129. Are you a native of Denmark? Yes.
130. How many years have you been here? About thirty-five years, and I have been farming for about thirty years.

131. Have you had any experience of the Northern portion of the State? No.
132. So far as your experience goes, there is nothing in connection with the cultivation of cane that white men cannot do? No; it is not a nice job trashing cane, but I do not do it myself. When you cut 3 April, 1906. the cane most of the leaves fall off, but if you trash it first it will cost you 1s. per ton extra. It will not cost you that if you cut it first.
133. Do they make a reduction for cane that is not trashed? Yes.
134. And they charge you for it? No; they charge just the same price. It is to the advantage of the millowners to have the cane trashed two or three months beforehand, because it takes out the water and makes it lighter, but it is to the advantage of the farmers not to trash it.
135. By Mr. Paget: Do you anticipate that a number of the better class of men working for you in this industry will eventually become cane-growers themselves and make the labour supply even less? Yes, if there were openings for them, a lot of the men would become farmers. The principal men who become cane farmers are the farmers' sons. It is seldom that you see these men without sons becoming farmers.
136. Have you not a large number becoming farmers the same as we have in the North? Only amongst the farmers' sons. Certainly the Swedes and Scandinavians become landowners in time.
137. The Scandinavians will have their piece of land? Yes; but I have seen them serve masters for a long time without a break. These are the class of people we want.
138. By the Chairman: If these people you speak of were made aware of the prospect of getting homes of their own, would not that be a good inducement for them to immigrate? Yes, it would.
139. Would you expect to get men of that class with some small savings—with a little money? Very few that I have seen or that I have known have come out here with money. They always come out respectable and with a good swag, but with very little money.
140. They have no actual money? Very little, but they very seldom go to any of the depôts for rations.
141. They go amongst friends? Yes, or sometimes straight away to work.
142. By Mr. Paget: They would not be able to pay their own passages? No.

WILLIAM JAMES TUTIN, Farmer, Gooburrum, examined:

143. By the Chairman: What are you? I am a farmer, residing at Gooburrum.
144. What area have you under cultivation? I do not think I have more than 1½ acres now.
145. What is that—cane? There is a very small portion of it cane.
146. You go in for general farming? Yes.
147. By Mr. Paget: What amount of cane did you grow? I used to grow cane altogether, but I have changed my business now for dairying.
148. Do you grow maize? Yes, a little maize.
149. By the Chairman: What is the largest area of cane you had? About 50 acres.
150. And you grew it with the aid of coloured labour? Yes.
151. Did you cut any cane last year? No.
152. Do you expect to harvest any cane this year? No, but I will next year.
153. What can you tell us with regard to the facilities for getting white labour? I knocked off cane-growing because I had great difficulty about the labour.
154. You do not expect to be able to grow cane without white labour? No.
155. You did not try? No, I knocked it off when they spoke about the coloured labourer having to go; but since the bonus has been increased I am going to try it again.
156. What area of cane have you in now? About 5 acres.
157. You know the object of our research—Can you give us any information that will be useful to us? I believe it would be of advantage if small areas of ground were given to labourers to keep them in the district.
158. What do you mean by small areas? About 10 acres each. That would do them, because the men would be working for a time on plantations, and it would be an inducement to keep them in the district and let them have homes of their own.
159. And grow crops in their spare time? Yes.
160. From what source would you get that class of men? We would need to have immigration, there is no doubt about that.
161. Is there any available land for these men? I know a piece of ground in Gooburrum which contains over 1,000 acres of very suitable land.
162. Is it a reserve? It is a swamp, and it would require to be drained.
163. By Mr. Paget: Would it make suitable residential sites, if it is a swamp? There is high ground at the sides.
164. By the Chairman: Could that land be satisfactorily drained? I believe it could, and very cheaply too.
165. What is it—a pasturage reserve, or a camping reserve? It is a pasturage reserve.
166. What would the people say in whose interests this reserve was granted?—Is it used at all? Practically it is not used. It is of no use to anybody.
167. You think such an area as that would settle a good number of families? Yes, and by settling a good number of families there it would be of some advantage to the district.
168. By Mr. Paget: Are you aware that such a system has already been initiated in the North, in the sugar districts? I am not.
169. It was initiated by the Government settling the labourers on their own ground? I did not know that.
170. By the Chairman: Is there anything else that you think it would be of advantage for us to know? Nothing, except that I think that in the future there will be a shortage of labour; but up to now it has not been felt.
171. Owing to the bad seasons? Yes, and the increase of the bonus will put more ground under cultivation.
172. You think there will be a shortage of labour apart from the fact of the Polynesians going away? The Polynesians going away must be replaced by somebody. I think there will be more ground put under sugar, but at present there is not as much under cane as there was three years ago. We had

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W. J. Tutin.

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- W. J. Tutin. 1,500 acres under cane three years ago, but now I do not think you will find 1,000 acres. That is accounted for by the drought and the labour conditions.
- 3 April, 1906. 173. *By the Chairman*: At present you are not employing much labour? No.
174. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are there not lands in your district which have been thrown out of cane cultivation? Yes.
175. Not on account of the drought, but simply because the growers would not continue growing cane any longer? I do not think so, because a neighbour of mine got 30 tons an acre last year on inferior ground.
176. *By the Chairman*: How long had this land been out of cane cultivation? It had been under grass for four or five years—it might be longer.
177. *By Mr. Paget*: Where was the cane crushed? It all goes to Fairymead.
178. *By Mr. Nielson*: If this reserve at Gooburrum were cut up into 10-acre blocks, it would only serve the Gooburrum demand for labour—Would that be of any use to the Woongarra Scrub people? I think so, because the reserve is not more than 2 miles from Bundaberg.
179. Would it be any use to the Bundaberg district or Bingera? If families were settled there, if the men were not employed in one place they would find employment in another. You would have men in the district who would otherwise go up North or down South, and, when they were wanted, they would not be here.
180. Do you not think it would be an equally good idea if the large estates were cut into blocks? I believe that would do. Speaking as a member of the Shire Council, if that land were freehold, there would be additional rates from it.
181. *By Mr. Paget*: Speaking generally, you think that, if sugar-workers could get such homesteads, it would be a good thing? I believe that is the solution of the difficulty.
182. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think the owners of large estates should try to solve the difficulty by cutting up their own estates instead of cutting up the few reserves we have got? If I was the owner of a large estate, I should do it for my own benefit; but if this was done by the powers that be, it would be an advantage to others who have not sufficient ground to cut up a portion into small blocks.
183. *By the Chairman*: Do the small farmers want to have these reserves cut up? It would be an advantage to the small employers to have labour available.
184. But the small farmers have not the estates to cut up? No.
185. What acreage have you got? About 200 acres.
186. Is that all fit for cultivation? No.
187. About what proportion? About 40 acres.
188. *By Mr. Paget*: The remainder, of course, is grazing land? Yes.
189. *By Mr. Nielson*: You know that it would be to the advantage of the owners of the large plantations, and to the millowners, to have their plantations cut up into small farms? If I was the owner of one of those plantations, I should do it for my own benefit, to have the labour handy when I wanted it.
190. *By Mr. Paget*: Mr. Nielson wants to know your idea of cutting up the large estates into small farms—that is, the farmers cultivating their own land? I have never studied that question, but I think it would be an advantage. I do not think large estates can be worked successfully with white labour.
191. But you have no experience on that point? No.

DANIEL WILLIAM MAHONEY, Farmer, Gooburrum, examined:

- D. W. 192. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your holding? One hundred and twenty-six acres.
- Mahoney. 193. What proportion is under crop? About 40 acres.
- 3 April, 1906. 194. What is the crop? Thirty-six acres are under sugar.
195. Do you work your land with white or coloured labour? White labour.
196. What area did you cut last year? About 8 acres.
197. Did you cut it with your own family? No; I cut it by white labour.
198. What wages did you pay? I paid them by the ton.
199. They taking the mill weights? Yes.
200. What did you pay per ton? Three shillings.
201. Do you know what the men earned at that rate? No.
202. What was the weight per acre? I got 86½ tons from about 7½ acres—about 11 tons per acre.
203. How many men did you employ? Four.
204. How long were they cutting it? About three weeks.
205. Did they appear satisfied with the money they earned? They were not altogether satisfied, because I could not keep them going. I was limited to a certain tonnage every day to the mill, and sometimes the mill would not take all I could deliver. Consequently the men were not working full time.
206. Did they complain of the work being too hard? Not at all.
207. Were they strangers to you? No; they were local men whom I knew.
208. What do you expect to cut this year? About 24 acres.
209. Do you anticipate any difficulty in getting labour to take it off? No; I am in communication already with men to cut it.
210. Men settled about the place? No; men on the Richmond River who cut for me two years ago.
211. They are working there at the present time? Yes. They are four brothers—really good men—and they wrote to me asking if I could give them the work.
212. Do you intend to pay them by the ton or by the day? By the ton—3s. a ton, the same as before.
213. Is that for cutting and trashing? Cutting, trashing, and loading into drays.
214. Have you formed any opinion as to whether there is likely to be any scarcity of labour next year? I do not know. There seem to be plenty of men about at the present time. Of course I am not acquainted with other districts.
215. There will be no Pacific Islanders after this year? In that case there will be a scarcity of men.
216. Do the men live with your family when they are working for you, or do you have them in a tent or a hut? They live in a house, but not with me.
217. *By Mr. Paget*: Do they have their meals with your family? No; they cook for themselves. They provide their own ratons. If I have not got a tent for them they have tents of their own, and they put them up.

218. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think the mills might assist the small growers in many cases by giving them better facilities in the way of taking more regular quantities of cane? Yes. I am under an agreement to deliver my cane to a mill, but there is no stated amount that I have to send in. Sometimes I may put in 15 tons, and other days I will only be allowed to put in 8 or 10 tons. I never know what I am to put in. D. W. Mahoney.
3 April, 1906.

219. If you knew from the start what tonnage you could put in, it would assist you a good deal? It would save my men. It would not make such a wonderful difference to me.

220. *By the Chairman*: Would you be willing to contract to supply a certain quantity a day? Yes.

221. *By Mr. Nielson*: That same trouble exists pretty well all over the district? I think so.

222. *By the Chairman*: There is a certain waste of labour if men are kept idle? If I had known I would not be allowed to put in more cane, I would have put on only three men, and the other man would have been somewhere else, and the three men would have made better pay.

223. *By Mr. Paget*: Is it the general system in this district that the farmers have no arrangement with the mills to deliver a stated quantity every day? They have such agreements in some instances, but not in all. If it is fine weather they get in more than at other times, and they stop the farmers and not their own men. They make the little men wait for them. I heard a remark about this reserve at Gooburrum. I do not approve of the proposal to cut up that reserve, which is of great benefit to the small farmers in the neighbourhood, and to the town for grazing. There is a very large proportion of it swampy. It would be good for agriculture if it was drained, but you could not grow much on the remainder.

224. *By the Chairman*: It has more value as it is for pastoral purposes? It is more useful to the general public as a reserve. If it was cut up into small farms, I do not think men could make a living on it.

225. Mr. Tuin's idea was that, if it was subdivided into small holdings, it would provide regular labour. Do you approve of that? From that point of view it is all right. Men have to keep their families in town while they go away to work. I think there would be a great deal of labour got from the South if it were required here.

226. Do you mean from New South Wales? Yes.

227. How would you induce that labour to come here? Simply by writing to some people I know.

228. Like those men who came from the Richmond River? Yes.

229. Do you think there is much of that class of labour there? One man who wrote to me told me that he could bring up two gangs of fifty men if I could suggest any places where they could get permanent cutting.

230. Was that lately? About a month ago.

231. Were those men the sons of farmers on the Richmond? Yes.

232. But they went to work together in permanent gangs? They were not particularly anxious about working together. Four of them reckoned to come to me.

233. From that you imagine there is a good deal of labour down there? That is what they told me. The men who wrote to me worked at the Isis last year, and they worked two large gangs there—twenty in the gang—and when the season was over they went home again.

GEORGE PRINGLE, Sugar Plantation Manager, examined:

234. *By the Chairman*: How many years' experience have you had in connection with the sugar industry? Twelve. I have been in charge of cane farms in different parts of this district. I have also been overseer on a large plantation. G. Pringle.
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235. Are you working here at the present time? No; I am unemployed at present.

236. Have you had experience of employing white labour? I have had experience of kanakas, Hindoos, and white men. I have stood between the employer and the man.

237. Have you found white labour suitable for this class of work? I have had no difficulty with the men under me.

238. You have had a good class of men to do the work? I am satisfied about that.

239. What wages did you pay? When I was in charge last year I paid 25s. a week and food.

240. For can cutting? Cutting and loading.

241. Have you any idea of what tonnage a man could cut in a day? In a crop of 20 tons and over, I consider a good man should cut 3 tons a day—cutting and loading.

242. *By Mr. Paget*: Untrashed cane? Yes; of course, when it is over that—well-grown cane—the leaves fall off.

243. *By the Chairman*: Do you anticipate a shortage of labour in this district this year? No; I am satisfied there will be plenty of white labour.

244. Where does it come from so far as you know? The best class of labour I have had to do with has been local settlers, working through the season to make a cheque and then going back to their selections.

245. People settled within a radius of 20 miles, I suppose? Yes.

246. Have you had any experience of settlers from New South Wales? I have not had any experience of that, but I have heard that they have given satisfaction.

247. In that case, you would favour the idea of facilities being afforded to small settlers to settle in localities where they could get work during the harvesting season? I think the idea is a good one.

248. Assuming that such facilities existed, do you think there would be any difficulty in getting the farms taken up and used? I do not think so. It only wants an inducement to bring the men here.

249. I suppose men of that sort would require assistance in many instances? If they had a good season, they would be able to do for themselves.

250. That is to say, if they had a cheque to fall back upon? Yes. I think most of them would prefer that, too.

251. What area would you suggest as suitable for settlers of this class? I think about 20 acres.

252. Do you think that would be large enough? They would require some grazing land as well, just to fill in their time with during the slack season.

253. Men like that would never be out of employment? I am sure they would not, and they would be the best class of labour we could get for the sugar industry.

254. Are you familiar with the whole district? Yes.

- G. Pringle. 255. Would it be possible to find areas of land on which such settlement could be attempted? I hardly think sufficient land could be found in the reserves.
- 2 April, 1906. 256. Then the system could not be worked here, unless it was taken in hand by persons owning land? I think it would be much better if the large employers would take it up themselves. It would be to their interest to do so.
257. Would that solve the labour problem? It would to a great extent in this district.
258. *By Mr. Paget*: To your knowledge, has any plantation, or have any plantations, been cut up into small farms for the purpose of supplying mills with cane—that is, turning the mill into a central mill, the land being cut up into small farms? I have had no experience of it.
259. Do you know of any instance? I think they are now cutting up Bingera.
260. Has it not been done at all in the past? I think you misunderstand me. I do not think it would be wise to make every man a canegrower.
261. I am speaking of a different matter now—I am asking if you know if any of the large landowners in this district have, in the past, cut up their lands and leased them to farmers? I think it has been done.
262. Was it a success, or otherwise? I do not know anything about it.
263. *By the Chairman*: You said just now you were not in favour of making every man a canegrower. How would you suggest these men should fill in their spare time on their selections? They could grow a great deal for their own use, and they could have a few pigs, cows, and fowls.
264. Are there any creameries about here? There is a butter factory here. I think they could do better than by growing cane. My idea that they should not grow cane is to avoid clashing with the sugar season.
265. So that they should not have anything to take them away when the canecutting season came on? Yes.
266. *By Mr. Paget*: Practically, the family could attend to the other work? Yes. A man could arrange it so that his family could work his selection.
267. *By the Chairman*: What sort of a cheque do you think a man would require before he could start an enterprise of that description? It all depends on the conditions on which he gets his land. If he were not near a forest, and was thus unable to build his own house, I do not think he could do it under £10). I would not be afraid to try it myself on that amount.
268. *By the Chairman*: You know the general trend of this inquiry—Have you any information to give us? I think all that is wanted with regard to bringing labour to this district is to give the men sufficient inducement.
269. *By Mr. Nielson*: All that is required is to give them sufficient inducement? Yes; they will come here from the South if they get sufficient inducement. There are a number of farmers in the Pine River district who will come with their sons in the sugar season to Bundaberg.
270. *By the Chairman*: That is without looking outside our own State? Yes.
271. You know these people will come up here? I am sure of it.
272. They will come here for the current rate of wages? I should be inclined to offer more than the standard wages arrived at by the meeting the other day.
273. What was the standard arrived at the other day? 18s to 25s. per week and found. I consider that 25s. a week and found is not enough. The contract price agreed on—namely, 2s. 9d.—was all right, because, if they work on a 20-ton crop at that rate, they will have no difficulty in making 8s. 3d. per day.
274. *By Mr. Paget*: Is the meeting you refer to the one which is reported in the Bundaberg Star of to-day? Yes.
275. *By the Chairman*: You say that scale is not a good one? The contract price is very fair, but the wages are not sufficient.
276. How much do you allow a man for his living in this district? We allow 10s. a week.
277. He can live well on 10s. a week? Yes. There is no luxury, but plenty of good wholesome food.
278. Then you think it is only a question of offering sufficient wages to get people to come here? Yes; so far as we are concerned in the Bundaberg district, that is all that is required.
279. *By Mr. Paget*: During the harvest the men would have no objection to moving about in tents? I do not think they would object to it, but, of course, they would be more comfortable if they were housed.
280. The reason I asked that was because there are some farms where they would not have accommodation if eight or ten men should come along? I know a great many prefer the tents, but I think a man would be more comfortable in a house. I would prefer a house myself to a tent.
281. *By the Chairman*: You have had a good deal of experience in canegrowing? I have had to do with cane culture for the last twelve years.
282. Have you gone into it as a science, on improved principles? I was in charge of Dr. Maxwell's experimental plot for two years, acting under the instructions of Dr. Maxwell.
283. And I have no doubt it gave every satisfaction? Yes, it was very instructive and interesting, and the results were satisfactory.
284. Dr. Maxwell, no doubt, expressed himself in those terms to you? I expressed those terms in my own report to him.
285. Where was that experimental plantation? On Mr. Smith's farm, in the Woongarra Scrub.
286. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you say if the methods adopted by you were adopted by the farmers? No, they were not.
287. *By the Chairman*: Were they methods that the farmers could have adopted if they wished? Oh, yes.
288. Could they get the manures suggested by those experiments? Yes.
289. In spite of that, the farmers did not adopt those methods? They have not done so yet. Some of them might have taken a little from the experiments, but as a general rule they have not adopted the methods in use at the experimental station.
290. Do they consider that in the matter of manures and deep cultivation which were adopted at the plot it would mean a good deal of expenditure, which the average farmer could not go in for? They could do it on a small scale at first and keep on increasing the area under that treatment, and it would pay them to do it.
291. *By Mr. Paget*: Could the farmers use the ordinary plough to cultivate to the depth which you cultivated at the experimental plot? Yes.

292. What plough did you use—a disc plough? For the subsoil we used an ordinary swing plough, and for the other work any plough in the district would do.

293. *By the Chairman*: Can you give us any more information that will help us? No.

294. *By Mr. Paget*: The problem that faces the Commission is that at the end of the year a large number of labourers at present employed in the sugar industry will have to leave this State under the Commonwealth Act? Yes, I quite understand that.

295. Do you think there is a sufficiency of labour in the State to take their places?—Is there any surplus labour? I am doubtful if sufficient labour can be found for the large plantations.

296. I am not talking about the large or small plantations: but, if the sugar industry is to retain its output of last year, do you think the surplus labour available is sufficient to warrant the Commission in thinking that there is a sufficiency of labour to take the places of those who are going away? There is a sufficiency of labour, but there is not sufficient inducement to bring it here at present.

297. *By the Chairman*: On account of what? On account of the treatment the men get.

298. As to what? Well, accommodation.

299. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you not know that the legislation passed last year will cover that—All that is altered by the passing of the Shearers and Sugar Workers Accommodation Act? I understand it will be altered.

300. *By the Chairman*: Mr. Paget says that the legislation will cover that, so what other things are there which do not give sufficient inducement? The wages.

301. Do you think the wages are not satisfactory? The wages offered in regard to contract are all right, but the men I know are looking on the wages side of the question, and how much per week they will get, and they think that £1 10s. a week and found should be the standard, with a bonus of 2s. 6d. a week to every man who stayed the season out. I think that would be nearer the mark.

302. You recommend a bonus for every man staying the season out? Yes.

303. *By Mr. Paget*: Has not that system existed in this district? Yes; and it worked very successfully.

304. Have you anything to say about the rations? In many cases the quality of the rations is good, but they are spoiled in serving up.

305. *By the Chairman*: Bad cooking? Yes.

306. *By Mr. Paget*: The quantity and quality of the rations are satisfactory? Yes.

307. *By the Chairman*: You say they should be well cooked and decently served? Yes; it would pay the employers to consider that, as good men are deserving of good treatment.

FREDERICK LEWIS NOTT, Sugar-planter, Windermere, examined:

308. *By the Chairman*: Where is your plantation? At Windermere, in the Woongarra Scrub.

309. What area have you under cultivation? About 1,000 acres.

310. Do you manufacture your own sugar? Yes.

311. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you grow all cane, or do you grow other crops? All cane. We only grow a few acres of sorghum and corn.

312. *By the Chairman*: What class of labour do you employ? Both black and white.

313. How many white men do you employ? We have plantations at both Windermere and The Hummock, but we do not manufacture at Windermere.

314. We will confine ourselves to the plantation first—what labour do you employ there? Fifteen or sixteen whites and thirty-five blacks.

315. *By Mr. Paget*: What blacks—Hindoos? No, kanakas.

316. *By the Chairman*: Are these under agreement, or are they time-expired men? They are all under agreement, as you cannot employ a kanaka unless he is under agreement.

317. How many have you who were under the original agreement? They are all time-expired boys now.

318. *By Mr. Nielson*: Re-engaged? Yes.

319. *By the Chairman*: You have been cane-planting for many years? Twenty-eight years.

320. Would it be possible, having regard to the climate, to do all this work with white labour? It would be possible, but not probable.

321. Assuming the labour was available, is there any work that a white man could not do? I do not think white men can either cut cane or trash it profitably at the price we can afford to pay, competing in the open market.

322. What price can you afford to pay for trashing cane? There is cane and cane.

323. What would you consider an average crop—20 tons to the acre? For the last few years, but I hope not for the next few years. We used to have up to 80 and 100 tons when we had wet seasons.

324. But that was not the average for the district? It was a fair average crop at one time.

325. *By Mr. Paget*: That was when the scrub was virgin? Virgin scrub will not grow such a crop now. I have 66 acres of virgin scrub in now, and if I get more than 30 tons to the acre off a two-year-old crop I shall be satisfied. That is owing to want of rain. Twenty years ago I would have had at least 80 to 100 tons to the acre.

326. *By the Chairman*: How do you account for the difference? Want of rainfall.

327. Have you not had sufficient rainfall this year? No, we have not had a fair rainfall since 1898.

328. What rainfall have you had since January last? It would be sufficient if we got plenty through the rest of the year. You cannot make a crop in three months. We ought to have had rain in August, September, October, and November, and we had none at all. We had no rain for this crop until Christmas.

329. What would you consider a profitable price for cutting your 30-ton crop? I think I ought to get it trashed, cut, and loaded for 2s. 3d. a ton; and any man who cannot get good wages at that price ought to be turned out of Queensland as not fit to work. A kanaka will cut and load 4 tons a day comfortably, and if a white man can do the same, there is 9s. a day for him.

330. Do you employ white labour at all in cutting cane? I did the first year the bonus was given, but not since. I have employed white men at different times, but not since the "White Australia" business was started.

331. Is any portion of your cane white-grown? This year I have 220 acres registered for white-grown cane. The first year I registered some, but it was a very bad year owing to drought, and there was very little cane on it, and I gave the men who cut it a bonus for cutting it.

G. Pringle.

3 April, 1906.

F. L. Nott.

3 April, 1906.

- F. L. Nor. 332. What do you expect this 220 acres will cost you to cut? I could not tell you—I have not the slightest idea. If it is going to cost me very much, I shall put black labour on, and forfeit the bonus.
- 3 April, 1906. 333. You will have to dispense with your kanakas at the end of this year? Yes.
334. How do you propose to meet that difficulty? There will be any amount of Hindoos, Javanese, and Japanese.
335. What wages are paid to them? Last year I had Hindoos cutting and loading cane at 1s. 9d. a ton, and they loaded very nearly 4 tons a day—3 tons 17 cwt.
336. Did you have a large area cut at that rate? Not very much. I had my own "boys," but I had not enough, and I gave a contract to some Hindoos for 50 or 60 acres.
337. Were they apparently satisfied with the arrangement? The same men are eager to get a contract now at the same price.
338. *By Mr. Paget*: Did I understand you to say that, after it will be illegal to employ kanakas you have no intention of employing white labour? Not if I can possibly get out of it.
339. Do you intend to give up the cultivation of cane? Directly the kanakas stop, I reckon North Queensland will go down straight.
340. The Commission are asking you about this district at the present moment? I expect labour will come to this district from the North, and we shall get white labour or any labour as cheap as we ever had it.
341. *By the Chairman*: That is contingent on the collapse of North Queensland? That is an absolute certainty.
342. Then you do not view the future with any apprehension? Very little. I reckon we are safe here, but we shall survive at the expense of the North, as we did in 1890 and 1893.
343. Then you think you will have plenty white labour in the future? I say white and black. The planter does not care whether it is white or black so long as his cane is taken off satisfactorily. We do not care what a man's colour is—we want the work done.
344. You want it done at a price like 1s. 9d. a ton? We want it done at a price that will pay us. We have to sell our sugar against the markets of the world.
345. You think 1s. 9d. is as much as you can afford to pay? No; it depends on the crop.
346. But taking a 30-ton crop as a basis? Yes; I reckon a 30-ton crop is better for any white man than a 60-ton crop. He can make more money from it.
347. There is the contingency of even the Japanese and Hindoo labour failing you in time. Can you suggest a means of providing labour as a substitute for that labour? No; I do not think there is likely to be any failure with them.
348. In the ordinary course of nature there must be a failure, because they cannot live for ever? Do you not think others will come?
349. *By Mr. Paget*: They are not allowed to come? Well, there is a difference of opinion on that subject. You will want at least 10,000 white men to replace the 10,000 kanakas who are here. I believe there are 15,000 blacks engaged in the industry, and in putting it at 10,000 I am a long way below the real number. Well, where are you going to get 10,000 white men to replace even 10,000 blacks—assuming that one white man is equal to one black—which I do not grant at all?
350. I presume you will grant that one white labourer is equal to two coloured aliens? No. I have never seen a white man who could cut cane alongside a kanaka. Last year we had a difficulty in getting our mill filled with white men, although we gave the ordinary wages—ranging from £1 to £3, according to the nature of the work. We often had to run two or three days shorthanded because we could not get white men to replace the men who left.
351. Have you a system in your mill of paying a bonus to men who stay the whole season? We pay a bonus equal to 10 per cent. on his wages to the man who stops the whole season.
352. Is that system generally in force? It has been in force for some years. If we could not replace men in our mill last season, where can you get 10,000 or 12,000 white men? It is all very well to say we can draw on the Pine River, but there is plenty of work there for them, and they will not come here.
353. The Commission would like to remind you that the present question is the deportation of a certain number of Pacific Islanders who are now employed in connection with the industry—a number that is estimated at about 6,000? But you must also recollect that at the end of this year they are going to penalise any man who grows cane with black labour. You cannot dissociate one from the other.
354. *By the Chairman*: That is a matter we have nothing to do with. All we want to get is suggestions from you as to the sources from which those islanders can be replaced? The planters can do nothing at all. The Government will not allow them to go outside Australia to get labour. The Immigration Restriction Act prevents men from coming here under agreement. We could send to different countries in Europe and try to get labour, but we are prevented from doing so.
355. It was suggested to us this morning that, if some of the unutilised land in the district was subdivided into small areas, the men taking up those holdings would furnish the district with a permanent supply of labour—What is your opinion of that scheme? Where is the land to begin with?
356. We were told that several large owners have areas which they are not using? I do not know them. I do not think there are any such lands in the district that will grow sugar—or very little.
357. I am not talking about settling cane-growers on the land, but of allowing men to form homesteads from which they can work on the different plantations in the district? I heard 20 acres mentioned. Well, God help the man who goes on to such an area. He will want something behind him.
358. But could not a man with 60 or 100 acres make a little money with cows and pigs? He might.
359. And would not his labour then be available for the planters? What is he going to do with his own place for six months out of the year?
360. *By Mr. Paget*: It has been suggested that the family labour could work that? Why cannot his family do it for twelve months instead of six?
361. *By the Chairman*: Take your own case. Have you any land which you could subdivide on these conditions? I do not think I could do it. I leased about 900 acres in 1903 to tenants.
362. At what rental? Different rents—royalties principally.
363. What royalties? 2s. a ton on the cane.
364. Would that be a royalty they could afford to pay? Well, it would not pay me to lease it for less.
365. Is it not a fact that a great deal of the Darling Downs and Lockyer districts have been settled by men who took up land under the Act of 1868 and formed homesteads, where they left their wives and

families while they worked within a range of 30 or 40 miles of their selections, earned a cheque, and then came back to their homesteads? You cannot compare the Darling Downs and the Lockyer with sugar districts. The principle is all very well, but it will not work in practice. On the Darling Downs they grow wheat on halves, and do well at it. We are satisfied in the sugar industry if we get one-fifth. I leased all my land, except 70 acres, to tenants, and everyone of them made a mess of it and handed back the land, and it cost me £3 or £4 an acre to get it into a proper state of cultivation and ready to plant again.

366. How did the failure come about—Was it dry seasons, idleness on their part, or wrong treatment, or that they could not live on the land? It was a combination. It is all right to lease your land if you get good seasons. I leased mine for five years, and for the first three years it was all right. The next two years they did not know whether they were going to get a renewal or not, and my land was neglected. Every penny they made they saved.

367. *By Mr. Paget*: Suppose your tenants had had the right of renewal for more than five years, would they have not been more satisfied to put the money you say they put into their pockets into the land again? I would not like to answer that question.

368. *By the Chairman*: Is it not probable they would? No; because they had a clause in their agreements that, if they worked the place satisfactorily, at the end of the five years I agreed to give them another five years.

369. But to whose satisfaction? To my satisfaction, most decidedly not their own. But I never expressed dissatisfaction with them until they began to neglect the land.

370. *By Mr. Paget*: That is, they were not cultivating the land properly? They were not. A sugar-mill is not like a flourmill. You must run a sugar-mill from the start to the finish—you cannot stop. But, if you had all your land leased to small tenants, you would never keep your mill going.

371. Why not—That system is in force in other districts? Well, take the Mulgrave. There they cultivate the land and do all the work for the farmers.

372. Not in all instances—There is a large number of Government central mills that do no cultivation at all? Where are they?

373. *By Mr. Nielson*: Well, there is Nambour? You do not say that Nambour is successfully worked, do you? I don't.

374. *By Mr. Paget*: There is Plane Creek, and there is the Marian mill at Mackay? Neither of them has been successful. They cannot get the output, and it is that that is killing them. Pleystowe can put out 10,000 tons a year, and they cannot do one-half of it for the simple reason that they cannot get the cane. There is hardly any central mill in Queensland that is kept fully going where the mill does not help the growers in the way of labour. I suppose the Mulgrave is the most successful mill in Queensland, and they have done the whole of the work. Some of the farmers have not even got a horse and cart.

375. *By the Chairman*: But the crop has paid for the work? I do not say anything about that; but very likely, if the small growers had had to do the work, the millowners would have had to take it on their own shoulders.

376. It pays them to have the cane—Would it not pay you to do something of the same sort to assist the settlers for the sake of having the advantage of their labour? But it is very doubtful if the labour will be successful. There is not a place in the world where cane is grown successfully with white labour.

377. Witnesses have told us that white men can do the work? They have done it here in a small way.

378. If you can get twenty men by selection, you can get 100 by selection? Where are you to select them from?

379. *By Mr. Paget*: That is what we wish you to tell us? That is a puzzle I cannot attempt to solve. Ask me something easy. I do not think you are ever going to see sugar-cane grown in Queensland profitably by white labour in a large area.

380. *By the Chairman*: Then, in that case, you cannot suggest any scheme? The only thing I can see is for the Government—if they want us to grow cane with white labour—to allow us to go and get white labour.

381. That is just what we want you to suggest. Where can you get such labour? We have not considered the matter—we are prohibited. The Government say, "We will not allow men to land under contract; they are undesirable immigrants."

382. *By Mr. Paget*: But cannot you get a number of men in the South or in the Commonwealth? No. Since I have been sixteen years of age I have been a large employer of labour. I took charge of 100 men when I was sixteen years old, and I have been a large employer of labour ever since, and I say the labour is not to be had here. Last year we had a difficulty in filling our mill. Lots of men came round asking for jobs, but they would not take a job on the plantation—they wanted mill work.

383. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are you not aware that, if you can satisfy the Federal authorities that labour is not available, you can get a permit to get labour? But how are you going to satisfy Mr. Deakin? You have to satisfy him and Mr. Watson both. How are you going to satisfy them? They are impossible men—you can do nothing with them.

384. *By the Chairman*: But, assuming that that can be got over, can you suggest from what source labour can be got? If those gentlemen had not interfered, we would have got European labour.

385. From what source? We could have got Italians, and we could have got Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen; but we were not allowed to get them.

386. But supposing that the difficulty could be surmounted, you say you would advocate getting Italians. Have you had any experience of Italian labour? Yes.

387. Will you give us your experience of it? It was a very good class of labour.

388. When did you have that experience? Between 1890 and 1893 we landed about 100 Italians in this district. I had ten.

389. How did they turn out as labourers? As good labourers as I could wish for.

390. Were they respectable men? Yes. A good many of them are now settled in the district as farmers.

391. What wages did you pay them? I think it was 16s. a week and rations.

392. *By Mr. Paget*: Who paid their passages? They came out as nominated immigrants. We paid £4 a head.

- F. L. Nott. 393. *By the Chairman*: And they were good workers—how did they stand the heat? When I say I was satisfied with them, a man could not well be satisfied with ten men who did not understand English.
- 3 April. 1906. You want a big lot of them with someone over them who understands their language. They were good workers, but there was a difficulty in understanding them.
394. But, if you could get men of their nationality, would you approve of them? Yes; and I do not think there would be the slightest difficulty in getting them.
395. You would be able to pay them from 20s. to 25s. a week? No; you cannot expect a new chum to get the same wages as a man who is acclimatised. For the first six months he would not be much good.
396. You would have to allow something for acclimatisation? Most certainly.
397. After six months they would be able to compete with others in the labour market? Yes. When you get a new chum from England he cannot work in the field alongside an ordinary man here.
398. Who had a witness here this morning who says he has seen it done? He had not to pay him, I expect.
399. What is a kanaka worth to you a week? I reckon he costs us about 18s. a week, including everything.
400. What wages do you pay under agreements? From 9s. to 13s.
401. *By Mr. Paget*: For long engagements? Till the end of the year.
402. *By the Chairman*: What does their keep cost? You cannot keep them under 5s. 6d. or 6s. a week, and then you have to pay them whether they are sick or whether they are well—whether they work or whether they don't. You cannot reckon a kanaka under 18s. a week now.
403. He is the same value to you as the white labourer to whom you pay 25s. a week? I reckon he can do a good deal more work cutting and trashing cane.
404. *By Mr. Paget*: What do you estimate is the cost of the rations supplied to the white men? Ten shillings a week.
405. That is what it costs for cooking and housing them? I reckon it costs 10s. a week for every white man on the place.
406. That is the total cost? Yes. I had been running the Windermere mill at 9s. a week for each man, but I refused to do it any longer, and since New Year's Day I have charged them 10s. a week.
407. *By the Chairman*: What necessitated that? Because it did not pay me.
408. *By Mr. Nielson*: What allowance per man per week did you take from your income tax return? Ten shillings a week. Our regular hands are nearly all married men, and we give them so much per week.
409. You do not find them? No; except in the crushing season.
410. You are allowed 10s. a week for each man by the Income Tax Commissioner? I cannot tell you that.
411. *By Mr. Paget*: Does the Income Tax Commissioner make any objection to your allowing 10s. a week? I do not think I ever put the cost of rations into my income tax return.
412. *By Mr. Nielson*: You must have put it in in wages and allowances? I never make out an income tax return, as my clerk does it.
413. *By Mr. Paget*: He must have done it? I do not know.
414. *By Mr. Nielson*: You know that plantation men get the option of so much wages and finding themselves? No; I do not know that, as we allow a man 1s. 6d. a day who tucksers himself. The only men who tucker themselves are married men, and we allow them houses, wood, and water.
415. *By the Chairman*: Apart from Italians, have you any other labour you can suggest? We have been blocked from going into the matter, as it is no use going into the matter in the present state of the Commonwealth law. It is useless to go into the matter as we cannot send to any place, because if we did so directly they arrived here they would be refused permission to land.
416. You are evidently not up to date as to your legislation? Well, you have the case of the six hatters to take into consideration.
417. You have had legislation since that? They would not be allowed to land if we did bring them.
418. *By Mr. Nielson*: You know that after the 31st of December this year you will have to make new arrangements? Yes; the kanakas will disappear then.
419. Do you not think it is about time you made some arrangements? There is other labour besides kanakas.
420. Do you expect to get them all in the Bundaberg district? I expect to get them from all the other districts, as you know that history generally repeats itself. Sir Horace Tozer was afraid to bring his maid out here.
421. *By the Chairman*: That is ancient history? No, it is not.
422. That has all been corrected? No.
423. *By Mr. Nielson*: You know that you can get nominated immigrants from England and Europe? Yes, to their friends, but not under agreement.
424. You know that you can get nominated immigrants out here? Not under agreement. Do you think I would pay £4 or £5 per head for an agreement to come out here? If you sent for nominated immigrants to come out to their friends it would be all right, but if you brought them out under agreement you could not land them. There is a great difference between a nominated immigrant and an indentured immigrant. No man would nominate forty or fifty persons to come out here and pay £3, £4, and £5 per head for them unless he was certain he would get something from them. There is nothing altered in the Immigration Restriction Act to allow me to bring out ten men under agreement; at least I do not think there is.
425. Are you not aware that within the last four months the Commonwealth Parliament passed an Act practically to enable you to get agricultural labour if you want it? There has been no Act passed by the Commonwealth Parliament to enable me to send to Italy or any other place and bring men out here.
426. *By the Chairman*: If you get the Commonwealth Statute No. 19, of 1905, it will show you—Section 5, subsection B, reads—

The Minister shall approve the terms of the contract only if in his opinion there is difficulty in employers obtaining within the Commonwealth a worker of at least equal skill and ability?

There you go; it rests with the Minister whether he will allow him to pass when he comes here. It is

ridiculous to think that any man would be foolish enough to bring out men, and when they get here they cannot land until you get a pass from the Minister. It is absurd. F. L. Sott.

427. *By Mr. Nielson*: But you get the permit before you send for them? No; it is when they land 3 April, 1906 here.

428. *By the Chairman*: Will you send for a copy of this Act? What is the good of that, because when they arrive here you have to get the permission of the Minister, and I am liable for £50 for every man that is brought in.

429. *By Mr. Paget*: Under this Act the Minister gives you permission before you send for the men? What is the use of trying to prove that I cannot get men of equal skill and ability, as there is no skill in cutting cane.

430. *By the Chairman*: Can you suggest any other labourers that might be brought here? An alteration in the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act would enable men to bring labour here.

431. Has that not been done? No; it has not been done, as certain information must be given to the satisfaction of the Minister.

432. I fancy you will not find it very difficult to prove to anybody that when 6,000 men are leaving the State there will be some difficulty about filling their places? We have had Ministers here whom no man could please, and we had one who thought you had to gather the sugar off bushes.

433. *By Mr. Paget*: And nurseries where they struck the cane from cuttings? Yes. How can you please men like that? He would not know a stick of sugar cane from a bamboo.

434. *By Mr. Nielson*: You say the rainfall was much better twenty years ago than it is now? Yes.

435. You have taken the fall at Windermere? Yes.

436. Does it show that the rainfall was better then than it is now? A long way better.

437. And you think, if we had the same amount of rain on virgin soil, it would grow the same amount of cane it did then? Yes.

438. You know that legislation cannot alter the rainfall? But it might be taken into consideration.

439. In what respect? To show that we have to suffer disabilities when bad seasons come.

440. Cannot you suggest anything to supplement the rainfall? Yes, irrigation.

441. *By Mr. Paget*: Would that be suitable for you? Yes.

442. Is there an available supply of water? There is any amount of water in the Elliott.

443. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would irrigation be any advantage? Yes; you would get better crops, and be able to pay better wages. As it is, it costs just as much to harvest a bad crop as a good crop, and probably more, because there is more work all through. If we had irrigation, we would have a good crop every year.

444. With regard to the blocks you leased, have you any of the tenants remaining? One. I have a man named Hansen who has been there since 1898.

445. What price have these men been getting for cane since 1898? 10s. and 11s.

446. Delivered at the mill? Yes; delivered at the mill they got a certain rate and half the sugar bonus that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company gave over.

447. What do their prices average? I think they averaged 12s. 3d. last year. I think the bonus was 1s. 3d. The bonus was on a sliding scale.

448. What did they average every year—did they average 12s. 6d? No.

449. Did they average 11s. 6d.? They averaged 10s. some years and 11s. some years. I cannot tell you exactly what was the least amount. They got the market price for the cane.

450. Has the tenant you have now registered for the bonus? Yes. He has two grown-up sons, and they do all the work except in crushing season, when they get assistance to do the cutting.

451. I suppose he pays his sons? I cannot tell you, as they all work together, and in the off season I get the sons to work on my place.

452. *By the Chairman*: Do you find them useful? They are very good men. You know we have to get the proper sort of men.

453. Have you any grazing land you could let to men on lease? I have good grazing land, but I would be sorry to settle men on grazing land. I have men on dairying land.

454. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many field hands do you employ on the average outside the crushing season? About seventy.

455. Would the number be the same if the place was worked by white labour instead of black? I should be very pleased if I could get the same number to do it.

456. In the season how many extra hands would you want? Not very many more, because the chipping would be all done then. I should probably want ten more, as the only extra work is the cutting and carting.

457. You would only want ten or a dozen more? Yes, because the men who were previously engaged at chipping would be put on to loading.

458. You would have a field hand for every 10 or 12 acres? I dare say it would take that, or perhaps one to 15 acres.

459. Do you not think that a man with his team of horses ought to work at the very least 20 acres? You cannot put a man on singly. That would be all very well if a man has 50 acres, and plants 5 or 10 acres at a time. But we plant 300 acres, and have to do the work in gangs.

460. What is the average? You cannot average it for the cutting.

461. I mean the cultivation only now—The man on 20 acres would do more? A good deal would depend on the season.

462. You would not want to plant 100 acres? I planted 300 acres in three months.

463. Then for that 300 acres you would want fifteen men? Not for planting. You must do it all at once.

464. What amount of planting can you do in a day? It all depends on your men and your land. You need to have three or four cutting plants, others cutting cane, and some carting. Then, so many have to fill up the boxes.

465. What does it take to do 10 acres a day? I can only do 5 acres in a day.

466. A contractor can do 10 acres? I would not like my cane done by contract. It matters a great deal to the man who is paying, and if a contractor does over 5 acres a day he cannot do it profitably.

467. You have a machine to do over 5 acres a day—Is that good work? Yes, it is good work.

F. L. Nott. 468. You say you want four men to cut the plants? Yes, and a man to fill up the boxes, and one or two more to cart it. It would take one or two men on the machine—one on the plough and one on the carrier.

3 April, 1906.

469. How many tons per day would a man cut for plants? Perhaps a man will cut off three stalks and throw away two of them, keeping only one for planting. There is only a plant or two on each stalk, and a lot is thrown away.

470. A man ought to cut 25 cwt. of cane for plants per day? I doubt if he will. He would not make 25 cwt. of plants.

471. He should be able to do it? They do it sometimes when they get ahead of the machine, as we cannot afford to let the machine stand idle.

472. By Mr. Paget: A man would have to cut a ton of plants to get sufficient to plant an acre? Yes.

473. By Mr. Nielson: What does it cost to chip per acre? I have never gone into that.

474. Have you ever tried to grow cane entirely by white labour? No; and I hope I never shall. I am grey enough as it is.

475. What does it cost you on the average to grow 1 ton of cane for yourself?—What does it cost when it gets to the mill? You cannot do it at much under 10s.

476. By Mr. Paget: That is with white and Pacific Island labour? Yes; Pacific Island labour now is as dear as any other, as you cannot do it much under 10s.

477. By Mr. Nielson: That is the average? Yes; but there may be a good season when you get a good crop. I know some cases where some got 12s. 6d., and they lost money by it.

478. By Mr. Nielson: I would like to ask you whether it is really your intention to continue cultivation on a large scale after the 1st of January of next year? I am going to try it.

479. With what class of labour? Black labour if I can get them.

480. Suppose you cannot get them? Then I suppose I shall have to try white. I am trying 250 acres this year with white labour.

481. That is not for cultivation? No; for harvesting.

482. In spite of what seems to be your predilection of coloured labour, would it not be to your interest to think out some scheme by which you could employ white labour profitably if you cannot get a sufficiency of coloured labour? I have seen many ups and downs in the sugar industry, and I suppose I shall have to think that over too.

483. You do not seem to be in favour of subdividing your freehold into small holdings for the farmers to supply your mill? Certainly not, as I know the trouble I had before. I could never get the cane supplied properly.

484. By Mr. Nielson: Would you be inclined to subdivide your plantation into blocks for sale? No. I have lived there for twenty-eight years, and I do not see why I should be ousted now. I do not see why a man should not be allowed to have a home in Queensland as well as anywhere else.

485. By Mr. Paget: You do not receive much cane from anywhere else? Not very much. We do not buy 10 per cent. of the cane that we crush.

486. Where the farmers supply the cane, do you arrange for these men to supply to you a certain tonnage for every day you crush? Yes.

487. Is that arrangement carried on satisfactorily? No, they sometimes want to run in a good deal more and at other times a good deal less. If they have 1,000 tons, they want to send in 15 tons a day and get it done in one-third of the time.

488. A witness said this morning that he could get no arrangement with the mill so that the men could be kept regularly at work? That may be true. Perhaps he wanted twenty men put on, but the mill would only take ten men's work from him.

489. The statement is made that the millowner tells the farmer one day to bring in 15 tons, and the next day he will only take 5 tons of cane—is that so? We go round and see the man's crop. He may tell us that he has 500 tons of cane, but we think he has got 400 tons when we go and see it. We say, "You have got 400 tons. We will crush so many days, and take so much cane from you each day. If we find after a bit that we are not taking enough, we guarantee to have your cane off as soon as anybody else's."

490. By the Chairman: Have you told the men not to send so much? If a man sends more than we agree on, we will not take it. Some of them want to rush us with it.

491. By Mr. Paget: What do you do then? We agree to take so many tons a day, and we keep going without a stop. We may stop to attend to something at the mill. If we stop at all, it is only because of a breakdown or something like that. Sometimes some men will want to rush in 25 and 50 per cent. more than we agreed on, and then we stop them, as, if we take 25 per cent. more from one man than we agreed on, that means that some other man will have to knock off 25 per cent. from the quantity he is supplying.

HORACE EDWARD BROUGHTON YOUNG, Sugar Planter, Fairymead, examined:

H. E. B.
Young.

3 April, 1906.

492. By the Chairman: You are a sugar-planter? Yes.

493. What is the name of your estate? Fairymead. I am a member of the firm of A., H., & E. Young.

494. What experience have you had in the sugar industry? I have been twenty-six years connected with the industry.

495. What acreage have you under crop at the present time? Something over 4,000 acres under cane.

496. By Mr. Paget: That is cultivated by the firm? Yes.

497. By the Chairman: What class of labour do you work with? Kanaka labour entirely in the past. Now we have some estates registered for white labour.

498. By Mr. Paget: You employ white labour as well as kanaka, do you not? Yes. I suppose they are in the ratio of one white man to three kanakas.

499. By the Chairman: Do you employ white men in the field work? Yes.

500. In the registered estates necessarily so? Yes, entirely.

501. How do you find the field work prospers in their hands? We have only had two months' experience of their doing the whole of the field work. Before that they were employed at ploughing and doing the superior class of work.

502. They are now doing the chipping and hoeing as well? Yes; planting, chipping and hoeing, and everything.

503. Have they given you satisfaction? They are doing very good work.

H. E. B.
Young.

504. Those two months have been during the summer? Yes.
505. Have you heard any of them complain of prostration from the heat? No. Just one or two days they felt the heat a little, but they made no complaints about it.
506. *By Mr. Paget*: How many acres have you registered this year under white labour conditions? 3 April, 1906.
- About 1,500 acres in the Isis, about 800 acres on Avondale on the Kolan, and 300 acres on Fairymead—that is a total of 2,600 acres.
507. *By the Chairman*: What number of kanakas have you now? 220.
508. You will have to dispense with their services at the end of this year? Yes.
509. What provision do you propose to make to replace them? We hope to be able to replace them with white labour, if it is procurable at anything like a reasonable rate of wage.
510. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many white field hands have you at present? I can hardly tell you exactly—about 100 on all four estates.
511. *By the Chairman*: Those 100 field hands are practically cultivating one-half of your estates? There has really been 200 part of the time. The cane is now getting out of hand, and they are being put to other work such as cutting firewood. We are trying to find work for as many as we can.
512. Then, roughly speaking, you will require 200 additional hands after the end of this year? We will require more. Our usual staff of Islanders is close on 600. If we fall below that, the work always suffers.
513. *By Mr. Paget*: The 2,600 acres were practically out of hand when they were registered? Yes.
514. So that you are not obliged to put on the number of white men to continue the work that you would have had to put on if you started ploughing and planting with white labour? That is so. Of course the cane was half-grown. In many cases the crop was 3 or 4 feet high when it was registered, and it was cultivated by black labour up to 18th or 19th January.
515. *By the Chairman*: A very large proportion of the manual labour was done then? Yes. As a matter of fact, in the Isis we have only thirty or forty men on the 1,500 acres, and it is hard to find work for them now.
516. That condition of things will continue until the crushing season? Yes.
517. Is it your practice to have the cane trashed before it is cut? No, we never trash.
518. That is, the cane is trashed when it is being cut? Yes, it is trashed by the cutters. The reason for that is that the frosts destroy the cane if it is trashed. Further north, no doubt trashing is an absolute necessity in view of the more humid climate.
519. Have you ever harvested cane by contract? No.
520. Have you ever cut it by white labour? Not a single ton. It has all been done by kanakas.
521. Then you are not able to give any information with regard to contract prices, or what a man can earn? Of course, I have an idea, but I have no personal experience.
522. *By Mr. Nielson*: What is the total area you have under cane? Something like 4,300 acres.
523. How many field hands will you require, on an average, in the off season to cultivate your estate? Roughly, 300.
524. *By Mr. Paget*: One man to every 15 acres? Yes; for the six months we have something like that now. We have 220 kanakas and about 100 white men.
525. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many extra men will you want during the harvesting season? We shall require rather less field hands, but we shall require more harvesting hands. I reckon on 300 harvesting hands, and we can probably scrape through with 200 cultivating hands during the other six months.
526. Five hundred hands, then, will be sufficient during the harvesting season altogether? I think so.
527. Did you plant any cane this March? No; we finished planting in January.
528. Did you plant any at all this year with white labour? No; it was all done with kanakas.
529. You have been through the North? Not the extreme North. I have not been further north than Townsville.
530. You have been on the Burdekin? Yes.
531. And in different Northern districts? Yes; Mackay, but not further north than Townsville.
532. Is the field cultivation as good in the North as it is in this district? On the Pioneer Estate in the Burdekin it is better, but I do not think it is better in any other place that I have come across. I have not been at Mackay for many years, and it is hard to make a comparison. I suppose it is about the same there as here.
533. *By Mr. Paget*: The Pioneer Estate is irrigated? Yes.
534. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you plant cane with a machine? No. We hand-plant.
535. Do you know anything about planting by machinery? No.
536. Have you had any experience of the cultivation of self-trashing varieties of cane? No. Some canes are more difficult to trash than others, but I have never known a cane that would actually trash itself completely.
537. When the Sugar Commission was in Buidaberg in 1889, your brother Arthur, in giving evidence, said: "I think that the planters of this district are not altogether wedded to this class of labour"—(meaning kaka labour)—and he went on to say, "It resolves itself into a matter of cost?" That is exactly our opinion to-day.
538. Do you think the industry can be carried on profitably under the present law if the price of sugar is maintained at a reasonable figure? If it can be carried on at something like the present cost of production, and with the present laws with regard to the bounty for five years, it can be carried on in this district with profit.
539. *By the Chairman*: At the present wages? Yes.
540. *By Mr. Nielson*: You think yourself, speaking for this district, as I do not want you to give any information about any other district, that the continuance of the industry depends largely on the question of cost? Yes.
541. And if you get sufficient protection, whether in the shape of bounty or bonus, provided it is sufficient protection, you think that the industry can be carried on by white labour in this district? Yes; that is, of course, with reasonable rates and wages.
542. All being a question of cost? Yes. We could not pay tradesmen's wages to agricultural labourers.
543. *By the Chairman*: With wages the same as they are now? Yes, or perhaps a slight rise in wages.
544. What wages are you paying? 20s. a week and found.
545. *By Mr. Paget*: That is apparently the wage for the ordinary field labourer? Yes.

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546. *By the Chairman*: You have no difficulty in getting labour at that rate? So far, we have had no difficulty.
547. *By Mr. Nielson*: For some years at Fairymead you were without irrigation? Yes.
548. Can you tell me to what extent has your irrigation system affected the cost of cane? It has not reduced the cost at all. It costs us just as much per ton as it ever did, but, of course, we can produce a larger crop and there is a larger margin of profit to the grower and to the mill.
549. *By Mr. Paget*: And it makes your crop safer than being dependent entirely on the seasons? Yes, because in the past you might have estimated a return of 75,000 tons of cane and got 32,000 tons. Our estimates used to be 70,000 tons, but in the drought years of 1900, 1901, and 1902 it dropped down to 30,000 tons, and once it went under 20,000 tons. All our estates cannot be irrigated.
550. *By Mr. Nielson*: But with the area you have irrigated your estimates come out fairly correct? Yes.
551. You can give an estimate now that will come out fairly correct? Yes; but we are not independent of the seasons. We must have heat as well as moisture.
552. Your brother said, in 1889, that if something could be done by the Government to advance money to these districts requiring water schemes, it would be a great factor in the solving of the water question—Do you think that would hold good to-day? I do not know about that. In 1889 we had no experience of irrigation, and no doubt we had very exaggerated ideas about the benefits from it. We have found that it certainly means more labour to work irrigation, but there is a larger crop to pay for it.
553. Your returns are better? Yes.
554. Can you tell us whether the cost of irrigation is not saved to a great extent by the lesser hoeing and chipping required? I think it is partly. In our system we are very flat, and we have to keep a great number of drains open to take off the surface water, and after every watering we have to use scarifiers and a drill plough to open it up again. Every time these implements go through they fill up the drains, and there is a large staff employed simply shovelling out the drains to prepare for the next watering.
555. *By the Chairman*: That would be all the expenditure of chipping saved? Yes. The irrigation staff is in excess of the other staff.
556. *By Mr. Nielson*: Notwithstanding this, you think irrigation pays? Yes, it does.
557. Then one effect of this would be that you would have a greater number of men when your harvesting is on? Yes.
558. It will keep more men employed in the interval? Yes; but, unfortunately, it increases the staff in the crushing season, as those hands are extra.
559. *By Mr. Paget*: That adds to the labour difficulty? Yes; in every way. It adds to the accommodation, cooking, and everything. It is all extra.
560. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you formed any opinion as to whether there is likely to be a shortage of labour in this district during the coming season? I think there is a strong probability of there being a shortage.
561. *By the Chairman*: Prior to the 31st of December? Yes; because there are very few kamikas left in the district. We have only one-third of what we usually had, and others, I suppose, have less in proportion than they had before. It is a large crop to deal with, and it will certainly take a large staff of labour to take it off.
562. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you or your farmers, either alone or in conjunction with others, taken any steps to ascertain whether you will have sufficient labour for the coming crushing season? No, we have taken no steps yet to engage labour.
563. You have not secured it or provided for it? No.
564. Have you any suggestion to make for the benefit of the industry as to what steps can be taken, or what organisation can be formed, to in some way control the supply or distribute the labour in the various districts? My opinion is that the growers in each district should organise and appoint agents in the various farming centres of this and the other States, and endeavour to get the right class of labour—the agricultural labourer—and inform him of the nature of the work, the amount of work to be done, the wages to be paid, and the duration of the work. In that way it would be an inducement to give employment to suitable men. It is no use to the industry to send men who know nothing about the work. There may be thousands of unemployed in Brisbane, but they are of no use to us unless they understand the class of work for which they are required. It is no use getting a goldsmith's assistant to come up and cut cane, because he does not understand it and he does not care about the work.
565. You intend to take some steps with reference to the labour? Yes; we want to get the Farmers' Association to take it up; but if they will do nothing we will move ourselves in some way.
566. Did you have any experience of the Italian labour? No; only an odd man.
567. You did not get any Italians? No.
568. *By the Chairman*: Do you know anything about them? There were a good many in this district, and they were very good men so far as I could hear. I think they are very suitable for the class of work.
569. Did you overhear anything to their detriment as colonists, or as to their character? No; I never heard anything against them. I think their great object is to get a little property of their own, and settle down as shopkeepers, or on a little farm. They will settle on the land if they can.
570. *By Mr. Nielson*: What is the average cost at your place for the maintenance of a white labourer? Ten shillings a week.
571. Do any of your men find themselves? No.
572. Do you give them the option of finding themselves? In odd cases we do. There is no accommodation for them to cook for themselves there, and it is rather far from town for them to live in town.
573. Your firm used to own vessels in the labour trade? Yes.
574. And you have some knowledge of the returning of islanders? Yes.
575. You are aware that there are about 6,000 Pacific Islanders in Queensland at the present time who have to be returned to their islands after the 31st of December? Yes.
576. I presume you are aware of the number of vessels engaged in the trade at the present time? I only know of three, though there may be more.
577. Would those three vessels be sufficient to return that number of islanders, say, within six months? If the ships could be filled every time, and there was no delay, they might possibly be able to take them over in six months.

678. *By Mr. Paget*: What would their carrying capacity be—150 each vessel? I do not think they would average that. On reconsidering the matter, I do not think the three vessels could possibly take them over in six months.
679. *By Mr. Nielson*: You are aware that the islanders are supposed to be returned after the 31st of December? Yes.
680. Can you suggest any scheme whereby they could be returned expeditiously? By chartering steamers they could be returned cheaply, I believe.
681. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you think they could be returned as cheaply by chartering steamers as the present method? No, I think the present method is the cheapest. But there are not enough vessels to take them away in six months.
682. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know, from your experience of the islanders who are here, if they are, generally speaking, desirous of returning home? I think the great bulk of them probably want to return, but still they are not in any hurry, as they keep re-engaging. Many put their names down to go away in a certain ship and then draw back at the last hour, as I have found to my cost.
683. You do not know what influence may have been at work to induce them to come back if they wanted to go home? It may have been that they were tempted by higher wages, or perhaps their mates did not go in the same vessel.
684. *By Mr. Paget*: They are perfectly free agents to go or stay until the end of this year? Yes. A great many of them will be loth to leave Queensland at all.
685. *By Mr. Nielson*: As a rule, I suppose the boys know that they are supposed to leave after this year? Yes.
686. They are all aware of it? Yes, they are aware of it.
687. Have you any kanakas at Fairymead who are married to white women? No.
688. Have you any who are married to women of their own islands? Yes; but we have not got many. We have very few women. I do not think that we have more than six, and some of them are married to men belonging to different islands to themselves. They came out originally with husbands of their own islands, and when their husbands died they were married to other islanders.
689. *By Mr. Paget*: Have they families? Yes. One has a family of three, the eldest being fifteen years and the youngest about six or seven. Another has a family of four and another a family of two, all born at Fairymead.
690. *By the Chairman*: Have the children received any education? Yes, they attend the provisional school there.
691. Is the fifteen-year-old child a boy or a girl? A boy.
692. Have you any idea if these men and women think they will be deported to their own particular islands? I do not think they have any idea of their being separated. I do not think they contemplate that.
693. *By Mr. Paget*: Would it be safe for the wife to go to the husband's island? No. There would probably be no danger in the New Hebrides; but in the Solomon Islands there would be danger if either the husband or wife belonged to another island.
694. If a San Cristoval man and a Malayta woman were landed at the man's island, her husband's friends would object to it? Yes; we look on it in our private opinion that that would mean certain death to the woman.
695. And it would be the same in the case of a Solomon Islands woman and a New Hebrides man? If a man took his wife to his island, she would run a great risk of losing her life.
696. *By the Chairman*: Why would she not at the New Hebrides? Because they are more civilised at the New Hebrides, and more under the influence of missionary teachers.
697. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are there not mission stations at the Solomon Islands? Yes, there is a little establishment there, but they have hardly got outside their compounds yet. The missionaries have not been there long enough yet to influence a body of natives. My sister has received a letter from one of the missionaries at Malayta stating that the children born in Queensland die within six months at Malayta from what is called island fever. The island fever is very prevalent in many parts of the Solomon group, and the natives suffer very much from it, as well as the whites; but the kanaka children who arrive from Queensland suffer more than either.
698. *By the Chairman*: That is at Malayta? Yes; and also at Florida, and in the whole group. The children seem to have less stamina if they come from Queensland, and, as they cannot get any medical comforts, they die from island fever.
699. *By Mr. Paget*: I believe you have had considerable experience of Pacific Islanders at Fairymead, and your sister devotes some considerable attention to them as a missionary? My sister practically devotes her whole life to it.
700. Do you think there is any danger in deporting civilised Christianised islanders to their islands where the men are neither Christianised nor civilised? I do.
701. The men in the villages would object to the Christianised men entering their villages? Yes, especially at Malayta, where there is very great danger. If a man was a bushman from the interior of Malayta, and he came into a village, he would not be there a couple of weeks before they would make an end of him, and probably a cannibal feast would result.
702. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you any scheme by which such a catastrophe could be averted?—Have either yourself or Miss Young any scheme to suggest? I do not know if Miss Young has formed any definite plan. Of course they have been thinking that at the different mission stations they might collect together a certain number of islanders. They would form a group or a nucleus of a settlement, and they would be more or less self-protecting. They would be strong enough in numbers to protect themselves.
703. *By Mr. Paget*: To protect themselves by force of arms? I do not know about that.
704. Well, they would have to be muscular Christians? Yes.
705. *By the Chairman*: Would there be a difficulty about feeding? I believe that in a dry time when they have to grow sufficient crops, such as yams and potatoes, for themselves, by suddenly adding to the population there would be a difficulty in getting food.
706. *By Mr. Paget*: Suppose a sufficient quantity of food was returned with the ships, would that be sufficient or would it lead to a general scramble on the beach? We have heard stories of boxes being

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landed on the beach and they are hardly ashore before they are broken open and every person on the beach takes something, and in a few minutes there is nothing left. It may be the islander's way of propitiating his friends by distribution; his property so that they will have nothing left to covet.

607. You know that it is a difficult problem to solve, the repatriation of a large number of islanders in a very short time, and the Commission are only too anxious to get hold of the views that any man will offer, and that is why we ask yours? My own personal opinion—but I suppose it is of no value, because I belong to the planter class—is that they should not be deported until they want to go. If any of the Pacific Islanders wanted to go to their homes, they could give in their names to the Pacific Island office, and as soon as there were sufficient to make a ship load they could be sent home.

608. You know that after the 31st December it will be illegal to employ any islander, as all agreements must expire on that date, and you cannot employ an islander without an agreement? Yes; I understand that. We are on the horns of a dilemma.

609. *By Mr. Nielson*: You are aware that there are two or three places in the islands where they are anxious to get the boys from Queensland to go to work? I do not know myself, but I believe there are some places in the New Hebrides. But according to law these men must be returned to the spot or the "passage" they are recruited from.

610. Could not the islanders elect to go somewhere else? I do not know. I have known cases where the islanders wanted to be landed in certain islands not their own homes, but the Government agent would not take them there. I know the case of one boy who would not land at his own place, and he re-engaged and came back to Queensland rather than be put ashore at his own "passage."

611. Do you think it would be practicable, as you say, to wait till a boy expresses a desire to go home? It would be practicable if they were allowed to earn their living in the meantime while they were here.

612. But suppose they cannot be allowed? Well, if they are not allowed to be employed here, and not allowed to earn their living here, they must be deported, whether they lose their lives or not. They cannot live here and starve.

613. *By Mr. Paget*: You said some short time back that there had been some idea of getting parties of returning Christianised islanders from Queensland at Malaya? Yes.

614. But, under the law, the islanders must be returned to their "passages" or the particular brach from which they came, so it is impossible to send them to mission stations on any island unless they belong to that island? I think it would be unwise for the boys from New Hebrides to be taken to the mission station at Malaya, as the natives would resent it very much. Of course, the Solomon Island "boys" could be taken there.

615. *By the Chairman*: Even with their own consent? I think the natives of the place would resent it very much.

616. Is there not an Imperial officer stationed in the Solomons? Yes, at Tulagi.

617. Would not his presence be some measure of protection? I do not think so, unless they were landed on the small island of Tulagi, which is under his immediate supervision.

618. He would be no protection if they were landed at Malaya? Not unless he spent all his time on Malaya with a small armed force to overawe them.

619. *By Mr. Paget*: And then he could not be on the windward and the leeward side of the island at the same time? He might have an armed vessel cruising round the island.

620. *By the Chairman*: Mr. Woodford was over in Queensland some months ago? I have never met him.

621. *By Mr. Paget*: Did you meet Captain Rason when he was here? Yes; he was out at Fairymead. He is British Commissioner in the New Hebrides.

622. Are you aware whether he has any scheme for settling these deported islanders on their arrival in the New Hebrides? He may have, but he did not mention it when he was here.

623. *By the Chairman*: Have you been at Malaya? No.

624. The question with regard to the islanders who have to be repatriated after 31st December next is whether they will be possessed of sufficient means to support themselves until such time as a vessel can be found to take them home. Do they possess such means? Some of them have Savings Bank accounts, and, of course, they will have their last six months' wages paid to them, which will keep them a certain time.

625. I suppose some of them will be in poverty? Yes.

626. *By Mr. Paget*: Is the employer responsible for keeping the islanders until their return to their homes? I can only say I hope not. It is very difficult to find out what the law is nowadays.

627. I am speaking more particularly in connection with the re-engagement islanders? Of course we have always been responsible for keeping indentured boys until their return to the islands or until their re-engagement.

628. But what has been the practice hitherto in regard to the re-engagement boys—who will constitute by far the greater proportion to be returned at the end of the year—has the employer been held responsible for keeping them until their return home or until their re-engagement? It has not been so in the case of those who have said that they wish to remain in the country. If a boy said, "I want to go home again," and a ship was going, I think the employers have always been in the habit of supporting him until the ship went; but if they are not allowed to be employed, and there are no means of returning them to their islands, it would be very unreasonable and unfair to make an employer maintain those boys until they could be taken away.

629. The employer not having brought about the situation by his own act? Yes. He would be very glad to employ the kanakas; but if he is not allowed to do so, I think the country should step in and maintain the kanakas until they can be returned.

630. By "the country," whom do you mean? The Commonwealth.

631. You are not speaking of the State of Queensland? No, they are not responsible for the Commonwealth law; but I think the Commonwealth ought to pay. If we had been allowed to go on indenting islanders in the usual way, ships would have been sailing both ways.

632. In fact, the situation would not have arisen? That is so.

633. *By Mr. Nielson*: What price do you pay for cane delivered at your mill at Fairymead? It varies somewhat. Last year we paid up to 16s. for cane delivered at the mill.

634. Did you buy by analysis? No, by the ton.

635. *By the Chairman:* How did you gauge the price? For instance, some of the cane came 50 miles by rail.

636. Do you take delivery on the trucks? We take delivery loaded on the trucks and pay the railrage. By the time it lands at Fairymead it costs us up to 16s. a ton.

637. *By Mr. Paget:* But the man who delivers cane at your rollers receives a higher price than the man who delivers cane at Isis? Yes.

638. Can you say, approximately, what number of farmers are supplying cane to your mill? There is a very small proportion. For instance, last year we crushed 70,000 tons of cane, of which 1,300 tons were purchased, and the rest we grew ourselves.

639. Then, practically, you have no outside supplies? There are about twenty growers in the Gooburrum district who supplied a very small quantity, varying from 10 tons to 50 tons—they are practically dairymen. For all practical purposes we grow our own cane.

640. Do you know whether any growers who supply cane to your mill are Polynesians or Asiatics? None of them. They are all white men.

641. *By the Chairman:* Do you know of any islanders, male or female, who are infirm or so old that it would be injudicious or inhuman to send them to their islands—Have your firm any such islanders in their employment? None that I should call infirm, but some are getting pretty old. There are one or two men who have been with us for twenty years, and in that case they have practically forgotten their own islands, and probably their friends have all disappeared.

642. But would they be able to earn a living over there? It is hard to say.

643. Do you think it would be a hardship to the islanders whom you speak of as having been in the employment of your firm for twenty years if they were deported to their own islands? I do. I should be very sorry to be responsible for doing it. It is like signing a death warrant, as it is certain that within twelve months those men will cease to exist after they get there.

644. *By the Chairman:* Would such men go willingly? I do not think so. I have never asked them personally.

645. *By Mr. Nielson:* You have told us that you are cultivating about 15 acres per man? Yes.

646. I notice that in 1889, according to the statistics of your plantation, you were only cultivating at the rate of 4½ acres per kanaka. To what do you attribute the increase in the area *per capita*? Partly to the fact that a large part of our cane is now grown in the Isis district, and there it requires less labour than the black.

647. *By Mr. Paget:* You employed about 600 kanakas in 1889. Were any of them employed in the mill? Very likely, but I could not say definitely.

648. Years ago you were allowed to employ kanakas in the mills? I know we did employ them up to the time it was made illegal to do so.

649. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think improved agricultural implements have been a factor in increasing the area cultivated per man? I suppose it has had a little to do with it. We do use more implements; but we have a great many more than one man to 15 acres. You are including the area registered under white labour conditions.

650. You are employing about 320 men at present? Yes.

651. *By Mr. Paget:* There are 320 and then there are 100—that would work out at about 10 acres per man? Our usual staff is 600 islanders for about 4,300 acres.

652. That is one man to every 7 acres? Yes.

653. You have improved the conditions since 1889 with respect to labour? Yes.

654. *By Mr. Nielson:* Will you require 600 men in future? I do not think so.

655. Why not? That is taken on the average. Many times we require 600 and possibly more, but there are slack times when we can shorten hands, and that brings down the average.

656. That will reduce the number of extra hands to some extent, because you cannot shorten hands when you only employ kanakas? We have often had to find work for them—clearing land, cutting firewood, and so on.

657. You had to make work? Yes.

658. *By Mr. Paget:* The 320 men you now employ are all engaged in the cane fields? Yes.

659. Then you have a large number of men cutting firewood, have you not? Yes.

660. Hitherto firewood has been cut by kanaka labour? Yes.

661. That accounts for a portion of the kanaka labour during part of the year hitherto? Yes. For many years we had plenty of work for the islanders in the off season by simply extending the estates—clearing and planting new areas. We have got to the limit now that the mill can deal with, and we cannot employ them that way, so that it has become rather difficult to find work for them in the off season.

662. *By the Chairman:* Would it not be very much to your advantage, as regards white labour, if you were able to employ settlers in the vicinity? It would be a great advantage if the settlers were here and were available.

663. Would it not be to your advantage to endeavour to facilitate settlement of that kind? We have no means of doing so, because the land is all under cane.

664. Have you no land upon which you could settle people? Not land suitable for men to use for agricultural purposes.

665. Perhaps not for agricultural purposes; but for grazing and petty agriculture—a place that a man could make into a homestead for himself. Do you know of any land available for such a purpose? Not within reach of the work they would have to do.

666. *By Mr. Paget:* Assuming you had an area of 1,000 acres, could it be cut up into 100 blocks of 10 acres each to make homestead blocks for labourers—Even if the area were some distance from the plantations, would it not be very much to your advantage to have those men available for yourself or for other people in the district? I think it would be a great advantage, but I doubt very much whether a man would care to take up a 10-acre block in that way. I do not see how he could make much out of it.

667. The object is not to make a living off the 10 acres, but to give him a homestead which his family could reside, and where he could raise some pigs and poultry, whilst he himself could go out to work? A man requires a certain amount per year to maintain himself and his family in comfort; and if you only

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employ and pay a man for nine months in the year, he will be earning nothing for the other three months.

668. He could be earning something at this small block? A very industrious man might grow something, but when he had grown it I do not know what he would do with it.

669. If he keeps pigs and poultry, there is a big overseas market for them—You are on the railway? I believe the ordinary labouring man in the district would do that.

670. Do you not think that if such a scheme could be initiated it would be very much better for the men than to be walking about the roads during the time there is no employment for them in the sugar industry? It would be a very great benefit to them and to everyone concerned—employers and men. I think that an effort should be made to introduce men from Great Britain and Europe on those lines. There are numbers of men in the Old World who would settle down in that way.

671. I do not mean bringing them out under agreement, but to bring them here to settle on such blocks with the object of becoming sugar-workers? Yes, getting the bulk of their employment on the sugar plantations or farms.

672. *By the Chairman:* In a district where the land has passed from the Crown into the hands of third parties, is such a scheme possible unless the present holders of the land co-operated and placed their land at the disposal of settlers? I think most of our large landowners would be very pleased to do so.

673. You say that the land at your own disposal is simply pastoral land? No. Except in one instance—at Avondale—the whole area is under cane. Our Isis Estate, for instance, is all in cane.

674. *By Mr. Paget:* Is it the intention of your firm to subdivide your properties into farms with the object of letting or selling them to farmers in small areas? No. Our opinion is that the thing can be carried on better on a large scale than on a small one.

675. Have you tried the system I speak of in the past? We have never tried it ourselves. There has been a great deal done in the district, but in my opinion it has not been very successful.

676. At the present time your firm is rather inclined to continue the cultivation of their properties themselves? Yes.

677. Provided you are able to get a sufficient supply of suitable labour? We consider that, as in all commercial concerns, anything done on a large scale is more likely to be profitable than if undertaken on a small scale. There are many operations which cannot possibly be done on a small scale, but which can be done on a large scale. For instance, we find enormous benefit from steam ploughing. We have a steam plough which is practically engaged all the available suitable time in the year in cultivating our land up to 2 feet deep. A small owner with 20, 30, or 40 acres could not get his land cultivated in that way.

678. And it would be too expensive to travel such a plant from place to place for practically one day's work? Yes. We have a plant which cultivates 1,000 acres in the year. From some cause or another, such as grubs or drought, a field of 80 or 100 acres may be a total failure. Although drought does not affect us now at Fairmead—though it does other estates—we may lose a crop altogether, and have to replant, and in most cases we find it costs £10 an acre from the time the land is planted until it is harvested. In the case of 50 acres that would mean a loss of £500. If that happened to an individual farmer, it would practically ruin him; but, as it would only be a portion of our estate, we get a general average, which leaves a margin.

679. *By the Chairman:* Up to the present time you know of no concerted action to introduce white labour as a substitute for the Pacific Islanders who have to be deported? No.

680. I understood you to say that it is highly desirable some such action should be taken, and that without loss of time? Yes. I think we shall all have great difficulty in taking off the present growing crop unless some such action is taken. It will be still more difficult next year when all the islanders are gone. I think we shall have to fall back on Asiatic labour in many instances if we cannot get white labour.

681. *By Mr. Paget:* Where do you propose to get Asiatic labour from? You are not allowed to introduce it into the Commonwealth? I understand there are 80,000 coloured aliens in Australia besides Pacific Islanders.

682. *By the Chairman:* You surely would not suggest attracting 80,000 coloured aliens into Queensland? I think it would be a very bad thing; but, if a man with a crop of cane cannot get it off with white labour, he will get any labour he can to save himself from total ruin.

683. But you will concur that people who have taken no action to procure white labour can scarcely say that the thing is beyond their control; they must show that they have failed? It is very difficult for small farmers to combine. They do not know exactly what labour they will require.

684. You have farmers' associations and bodies of that description in this district? There are a number of them. In many instances I think they will wait, hoping that the labour will turn up in the district.

685. *By Mr. Paget:* Owing to the cessation of drought conditions, the position has materially altered in the West for the better? There is no doubt about that; and, as stock increase in the West, and there is more work for the ordinary Western worker, they will return to the work to which they have been brought up.

686. *By the Chairman:* Do you get many Western workers here? Yes.

687. Do they come down temporarily, or do they stop here? They were practically driven out of the West by the drought and want of employment.

688. And they will naturally gravitate back to the West under the improved conditions there? Yes. A few may prefer the coast life, but I think the great bulk of them will return when work is available in the West.

689. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know of any means whereby the Queensland Government might assist in the distribution of labour? I do not.

690. You have a Government Labour Bureau here—perhaps you have not made use of it? We occasionally get labour from there, but it has not always proved satisfactory. The first man on the books is sent out to fill a vacancy, and perhaps he has never done that class of work, or he may be an aged man. As a rule, we do not care for the class of labour we get through the bureau.

691. *By the Chairman:* Is it not a matter of chance getting labour through any registry office—the chances are no more against you in a Government Labour Bureau than in a private registry office? They are just the same; but we prefer to employ an agent of our own who knows our requirements.

JAMES CLARK, Manager of Ashgrove Plantation, examined:

692. *By the Chairman*: What experience have you had as a sugar-grower? I have been managing Ashgrove for ten years and have lived on it since I was a few months old.

693. What area have you under cultivation? At the present time about 150 acres.

694. What crop did you harvest last year—what area? We are not generally particular about the area. We harvested 1,300 tons of cane.

695. Did you work with white or black labour? Principally white.

696. And some coloured labour? Two.

697. You are not registered for the bonus? Yes, we are registered.

698. *By Mr. Paget*: Were you registered last year? Yes. We have been registered since the Act first came into force.

699. *By the Chairman*: How did you get the cane cut, by contract or day labour? Last year by day labour, but previous years by contract.

700. What wages did you pay? They varied a little. The inferior canecutters got as low as 22s. 6d., some got 25s., but the majority got 27s. 6d. with a bonus of 2s. 6d. for every man that waited till the end of the season.

701. *By Mr. Paget*: And their rations? Yes, they got rations as well.

702. *By the Chairman*: How was the bonus paid? They got 2s. 6d. per week for remaining till the end of the season.

703. How much would they harvest in a day? About 43 cwt. per man per day.

704. *By Mr. Paget*: You estimate the cost of rations at 10s. a week? Yes.

705. Each man averages in cutting and loading 13 tons a week? Yes, and they get 2s. 9d. per ton.

706. *By the Chairman*: You are satisfied with those results? Yes.

707. Have you any fears as to the supply of labour during the coming season—Are you liable to be short? I am pretty sure we will.

708. What labour do you get—just the itinerant labour? We have men working with us from season to season. Probably 75 per cent. of the men we had last season we shall have again this cutting season.

709. You will be 25 per cent. short this time? No, we shall not be 25 per cent. short. We may have 100,000 tons more cane harvested this season by white labour than hitherto, and under these circumstances we do not just know what might happen.

710. Those men who worked with you before are just as likely to return and work for you as anyone else? With the shortage of labour prices will go up, and I think there will be a shortage of labour.

711. Owing to the heavy crop? Owing to the larger area registered under the white labour regulations. One grower said just now that he had registered 2,600 acres.

712. Do the persons you employ for canecutting live in the locality, or do they come from afar? They very often go to the Downs after leaving here, and return again the following season.

713. We had instances this morning, for instance, of men who came from the Richmond River? We have had men from there, but they are not the ordinary tramps.

714. They are better men? By a long way. They are generally the sons of farmers who come up here for the sugar season, and they go back for the harvesting at home.

715. You realise that the scarcity of labour will become accentuated after the 31st of December? Very considerably.

716. Can you suggest any remedy? According to the Immigration Act, we have a big contract to prove to the Minister that the labour we require is not obtainable in the district, or even in the State. If that clause were removed, it would be all right.

717. We have nothing to do with legislation, but have to take it as it is; but you say that you think there will be a difficulty? I certainly think there will be a difficulty.

718. Without immigration? Without immigration, and immigration of a desirable class of people, and not the people we get sometimes. We want agricultural labourers, because no matter where they come from they are good. My own experience is that they are better on the Continent than in the British Isles.

719. What part of the continent? I refer to the Danes and Swedes, and Scandinavians.

720. We have had Italians mentioned? Yes, I have seen them here.

721. What were they like? They were very good men, indeed.

722. Did you have any? Yes, and have one now. All those we had were good men.

723. *By Mr. Paget*: Were they Piedmontese? I cannot tell you.

724. They were not Maltese? No. There is one thing about the Danes and Scandinavians, and that is that they get an idea into their heads that they are going to be farmers and have land of their own. That is their main object. They are inclined to save, and they stick to their work as well as they possibly can for two or three years. We have had some men for over six or seven years, but many, instead of remaining with us, put in two or three years, and then make a start for themselves.

725. That is a very laudable object? It is a very laudable object, and helps them to do their work also. Of course we are sorry to lose them.

726. *By the Chairman*: But you are certain to get some of their labour in the future, although they take up farms of their own? No.

727. How is that? Probably a man who has left you in that way might be able to give you two or three months in the year, but it all depends on where he takes up his land. He may have to leave the locality and go somewhere else where land is available.

728. The State as a whole will benefit from that class of men? Yes, most decidedly.

729. The only remedy would be to offer such a man land in the district on which he could settle? Yes, that would be a good thing; but, unfortunately, we have not much land round here that would be available.

730. *By Mr. Paget*: The whole of the lands around here are alienated? Yes: a good deal of it. Then, as regards these men giving us any help, the very time that we would want to grow crops they would also want to grow, and the very time that we would want to harvest they would also want to harvest.

731. *By the Chairman*: He might become a farmer, but not necessarily a canegrower? If he can grow cane he would prefer to grow it before other crops. There is a certain market for cane, but for other crops you do not know what you will get for them.

J. Clark.

3 April, 1906.

- J. Clark. 732. *By Mr. Paget*: Suppose you cut up Ashgrove into ten farms? That would be only 15 acres each. Most of the young fellows here would not settle on 15 acres.
- 7 April, 1906. 733. Well, say that you cut it up into three farms of 50 acres each, you would not require the labour of any men at all then, as, if these three men settled on the land, they would attend to the cultivation themselves? They would require some extra labourers for themselves.
734. *By the Chairman*: Have you had any experience of working kanakas? Yes, considerable.
735. Have you any knowledge of what their feelings are about returning—Do they generally wish to return? Some of them resent it very much, and they are hoping against hope that they will be allowed to remain. Others have a feeling of retaliation against the authorities. Then some say, "If we have to go, we'll have to go." Others, again, do not want to go.
736. *By Mr. Paget*: Those who say they do not want to go home, are they men who have been here a long time? It is mostly those who have been here for fifteen or twenty years. I have heard several instances of children going home under optional conditions, and within six or twelve months the word comes back that these children have died since they landed.
737. I suppose they are young children up to ten years of age? Yes, and older than that. There is a fever of some kind in the Solomon Islands, and it seems to take hold of them very quickly, and they nearly always seem to succumb. We hear from the missionaries that almost every child that went back to the Solomon Islands, without exception, has died after being there for from three to six months.
738. *By Mr. Nielson*: I suppose a kanaka has as much love of his country and his home as people of any other race? I think so.
739. For that reason the great majority will want to go home again? There is a difference in this way: If a man comes from Europe, he will want to go home again if the conditions are similar to what they are here. But when a man has been here for some years, and finds he cannot stand the cold of England, it would be wrong to send him home; and the same thing applies to the Pacific Islanders. Some of these islanders have lived in Queensland for from fifteen to twenty years, and have become accustomed to the conditions we have in Queensland, and if we sent them back to their islands they would not get the diet they were accustomed to, and that would probably cause their death. Some of them think they would not live long if they went back to their islands.
740. Do you know of any kanakas who are married to white women? I cannot think of any at the present time.
741. *By Mr. Paget*: You stated some time back that you anticipated a shortage in the labour supply in the coming sugar season? Yes.
742. Have you yourself, or has any organisation, made any attempt to get a supply? We have thought about it. Suppose we write to some part of Queensland, and we are told there are 100 able-bodied men there available and willing to do the work for a certain figure. If we said to send those 100 along, we would find when they arrived here that not more than forty or fifty out of that number would be suitable for us.
743. *By the Chairman*: Why would they not be suitable? We get a largenumber of men on cane fields who are largely unsuitable for working on the plantations. During last season we engaged about eighteen or twenty men, though at least 100 must have passed through here. We ask men if they have cut cane, and they say they have cut it down on the Richmond; but as soon as they make a start you can see that they never had a knife in their hand before. Another man would be asked if he had ever done any loading before, and he would say that he had. Now loading is mere manual labour, and as soon as some of these men start you can see that they are lazy or incompetent.
744. Do you not think it is necessary for you to take some action to induce labour to come to the district? We had a meeting on Saturday afternoon last.
745. Do you not think you ought to take some action, as that meeting did not result in action? I did hear that it appeared in the *Bundaberg Star* this morning that we were offering a starvation wage.
746. *By Mr. Paget*: You said in your evidence that there would be 100,000 tons more cane to cut this season than last—Allowing 2 tone of cane per man per day, then you would require 500 more white men to harvest that crop—that is, before the karakas are deported at all; and what I would like to know is what attempt have you made to get that labour? No actual attempt has been made because we do not know how to go about it. If we arranged for 500 men to come here, we would only find 200 fit for the work when they did arrive.
747. *By the Chairman*: You know the Labour Bureau here? Yes, and the labour we have engaged through the bureau was very unsatisfactory.
748. Do you not think that if you talked the matter over with the officer in charge of the Labour Bureau some scheme could be initiated by which you would get over that difficulty? We have not been able to do anything with the men we have been supplied with from the bureau.
749. *By Mr. Nielson*: When a new chum kanaka arrives here he has to learn to cut the cane the same as a new chum white man? Yes; that is so.
750. And it takes the kanaka six months to learn? If a good, willing, hard working man comes along I will undertake to put him in the right way of cutting cane. A good many men who come here are starving and not able to work. That may have something to do with it, but they will not do the work.

CHARLES WILLIAM BUSS, Sugar Manufacturer, examined:

- C. W. Buss. 751. *By the Chairman*: Where is your factory? At Ashfield, in the Woongarra Scrub.
752. Have you any knowledge of the cultivation of cane? Yes; I have had twenty years' experience.
- 3 April, 1906. 753. Are you growing cane now? Yes.
754. What class of labour do you employ? Both white labour and islanders.
755. What kanakas have you now? I have sixteen islanders.
756. How many white men have you? About the same as the islanders.
757. Have you any other labour? No.
758. What area of cane have you under cultivation? About 350 acres.
759. What did you harvest last year? Roughly speaking, a little over 3,000 tons.
760. How did you get that in, by day labour or by contract? By contract with white labour.
761. What did you pay for that? I paid 2s. 1d. for trashed cane, and 3s. 4d. for untrashed cane. That is for cutting and loading on to the drays.

C. W. Buss.

3 April, 1906.

762. As regards the other cane, how did you harvest that? With the kanakas.
763. What did it cost? It cost me 2s. 6d. all round.
764. *By Mr. Nielson*: And it was partly trashed and partly untrashed? Yes.
765. About what do you expect to harvest next season? I do not expect to harvest quite so much this year.
766. How do you expect to be situated as regards labour this year? I expect to have great difficulty as regards white labour.
767. You say you have sixteen permanent men? Yes, that is with the mill hands and all.
768. How many have you in the field? I have five in the field.
769. You expect to have some difficulty in the coming season? Yes.
770. Why? (Owing to the scarcity of the proper class of white labour just now.
771. What wages are you prepared to give? I am prepared to go on the contract system for cutting.
772. I am speaking of the cultivation. You will cultivate with the labour you have and cut it by contract the same as you did last season? Yes.
773. Do you consider that a satisfactory price? Yes.
774. How much could they make a day? I am not quite sure of that, because I have no exact ideas as to how many men there are.
775. How much can your labourers cut and load? It varies according to the tonnage.
776. Well, last year how much a day could each man cut and load? It varies so, but after making it up at the end of the season it ran out as I have told you.
777. *By Mr. Paget*: At what cost per week did you estimate your allowance? 15s.
778. That averages a ton of cane a man a day cutting and loading? Yes.
779. *By the Chairman*: You expect a difficulty in connection with the supply of labour? Yes.
780. Are you in an out-of-the-way place? No; I am in the centre of the Scrub.
781. Is there always enough itinerant labour? I have had no difficulty in getting labour, but I think this season it will be difficult to get labour.
782. Why? Because there is considerably more registered cane to take off this year.
783. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you taken any organised steps to replace that labour? No.
784. *By the Chairman*: How many societies are there? There is the Woongarra Cane-growers' Association and the Manufacturers' Association in town.
785. Would it not be advisable for everyone to meet and try to attract a good class of labour to the district? The matter was only spoken of on Saturday.
786. You know that it requires something more than speaking about it? Yes.
787. With regard to the kanakas, are there any of these men of yours who have expressed a wish to return to the islands? Yes, some who have been with me for a long time do not like the idea of being sent home.
788. Did they give a reason for not liking it? They were very young when they came out, and they say that they would like to remain here.
789. How long have they been here? I have had one "boy" twenty years.
790. How would go back a stranger? Yes.
791. Has he expressed any fear about going back? I do not know about fear, but he does not like to go back.
792. Are any of your kanakas married? There is one married to a kanaka woman.
793. Not necessarily a member of the same tribe? I think it is in this case.

LENHART LUTZ, Farmer, Woongarra Scrub, examined:

L. Lutz.

3 April, 1906.

794. *By the Chairman*: How much land have you under cultivation? I have 27½ acres, practically all under cane.
795. Did you cut any last year? Yes; about 25 acres.
796. How much cane did you get? Pretty nearly 400 tons.
797. What labour did you employ to cut it? All white labour.
798. What did it cost you to cut the cane? 25s. a week and found.
799. *By Mr. Paget*: Did you give a bonus to the men who remained the whole season? Yes; 2s. 6d. a week.
800. *By the Chairman*: Did you ever estimate what it cost you per ton to cut and load? I have been taking contracts besides cutting my own, because I have a few sons, and the place being too small, I take on odd jobs now and again.
801. What would you expect to get for cutting a 30-ton crop, trashed and untrashed? A man could make it pay at 2s. 6d. a ton trashed. He could make better wages at 2s. 3d. a ton for a crop of from 15 to 20 tons than he could at 2s. 6d. a ton for a 25 or 30 ton crop, as in the latter case the cane is inclined to lie down.
802. If that cane were untrashed, what would you have done it for? Another 9d. a ton.
803. *By the Chairman*: How much could a man cut in a day? On a 15 to 20 ton crop he could average 4 tons a day, trashed, and about 3 tons, untrashed.
804. He would not make as much on a 3-ton crop? No, because he would take longer to cut and load.
805. Is it work that any white man need shirk in hot weather? I do not think so.
806. Have you ever done any other kind of work? Yes; I have been here for thirty years.
807. What do you consider the hardest work you have ever done? Firewood cutting would be about the hardest.
808. Which would you rather do—cut firewood or cane? Cane, a long way.
809. It is not a very dreadful thing, in that case? Not if a man is willing, but there are a lot of them who are not willing.
810. How old are your sons? My eldest son is close on seventeen, the next is fifteen, and the other thirteen years old.
811. *By Mr. Nielson*: Can the fifteen-year-old boy cut cane? Yes, and so can the thirteen-year-old boy.
812. What can they do? The fifteen-year old boy can average his 3 tons in the cane I have just mentioned and the loading as well.

- L. Lutz
8 April, 1906.
813. *By Mr. Paget*: I suppose he is a stout lump of a young fellow? No, he is very light.
814. *By Mr. Nielson*: You know there are several natives, sons of farmers in the Woongarra Scrub, who have left this district and gone North cane-cutting? I have heard of a few going. Stevenson, from the Heads, and two of my brothers went up, but I have never been there myself.
815. Why did they leave this district? I think they went more to see the district than anything else. They were short of a job, and thought they would see more country.
816. Some of them stopped there? I know one of my brothers did there.
817. The Stevensons are still there. Is it difficult for farmers' sons to get land in the Woongarra Scrub? It would be very difficult.
818. *By Mr. Paget*: What average price per acre is being asked for land? From £15 to £18 an acre.
819. Is that carrying a crop of cane? Yes.
820. The cane is given in with the price? Yes.
821. What would the cane be worth per acre? In an average year there would be from 12 to 15 tons per acre, worth 10s. per ton.
822. Would a farmer be able to net 10s. a ton? I do not think so.
823. Would he net 8s. a ton? I suppose he would.
824. Then £5 or £6 an acre is the value of the crop included in the price you mentioned? Yes.

(Bundaberg.)

WEDNESDAY, 4 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.
MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

FREDERICK COURTICE, Labourer, examined:

- F. Courtice
4 April, 1906.
825. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am a labourer, at present acting as organiser for the Sugar Workers' Union.
826. *By Mr. Paget*: And secretary? Yes.
827. *By the Chairman*: What are the objects of the union in connection with the organisation of labour? Chiefly to benefit the workers at present engaged.
828. In what direction? As regards the conditions applying to the industry.
829. Wages? Yes, and the shortening of the hours of labour.
830. To regulate the wages and hours of labour? Yes, and better the conditions generally with regard to rations.
831. And the accommodation and food? Yes.
832. Have you had a recent meeting on these lines? We have not had a recent meeting to fix the rate of wages, but we had a general meeting.
833. When was that? About a month ago. I may say that the union is just forming, and I have been appointed organiser to get the men to combine, so that we shall at an early date be able to fix the rate of wages.
834. It is just formed, and you have hardly got it into working order? Yes, that is it.
835. The object of the union is to fix the scale of wages, hours of work, and to see that your members are properly accommodated at the places where they are working? That is correct.
836. Have you had any experience in the cane-fields? I have.
837. Well, what has occurred to you as a fair rate of wages? In what respect do you mean?
838. Cane-cutting by day labour? Well, a fair rate of wages would be 30s. a week and found, or 7s. a day.
839. *By Mr. Paget*: That is for harvesting? Yes, but in the slack time good men should be paid 30s. a week and found just the same.
840. *By the Chairman*: You say they should get the same price all the year round? Yes. I consider a man wants the same rate of wages in the slack season to live as he gets in the crushing season. He would be just as valuable in the growing season as the crushing season.
841. What number of hours a week is it fair for a man to work at that description of work? I cannot speak for the Union, but 48 hours a week would satisfy me. I can work hard enough in 8 hours a day to get myself tired.
842. You know they work 58 hours sometimes? Yes, and I know they work 54 hours in some cases. I will give one instance to show how the planters encourage the white man to stop in the district. Messrs. Buss Brothers, at their plantation at Bonna, make their men work from 6 a.m. till 6 p.m. on week days, and from 6 a.m. till 4 p.m. on Saturdays. That is 11 hours on week days with 9 hours on Saturday, or 64 hours a week, and for that they get 18s. a week and food. I may say that the food is fairly good, considering the food which is supplied by the other planters. There is another thing which I may mention: If the men go out in the morning, and it rains, and they do not work a quarter of a day, they get no pay at all for that day. Then only get a wetting, and they have to go home again and change their clothes.
843. You say they do not get paid if they work less than a quarter of a day? They do not get any pay unless they work two and three-quarter hours. I will give another instance of what happens at Avondale. Messrs. Young Brothers, of Fairymead, also own Avondale. A man has to work 58 hours a week for £1.
844. *By Mr. Paget*: White men? Yes, white men; but under black men's conditions. The men get £1 a week and rations. The men complain of the rations supplied to them. They get meat, potatoes, and bread, but they are only allowed one tin of jam a week. The jam is doled out to them on Friday, and they do not get any more than that one tin until Friday comes round again. They have to watch that tin of jam for a week.
845. *By the Chairman*: What sort of accommodation is there at these places—that is, housing accommodation? The housing accommodation has been in tents; but I see they are complying with the provisions of the Shearers and Sugar Workers Accommodation Act.

846. They are complying with the statute as regards accommodation? Yes; they are putting it up in some places. With regard to Windermere, the accommodation there is very bad, and they are not making any attempt to better it. F. Courtice.

847. *By Mr. Pagel*: Is there not an inspector appointed for this district under the Shearers and Sugar Workers Accommodation Act? I am not aware that one is appointed, but I believe that one is going to be appointed. 4 April, 1906.

848. *By the Chairman*: Have you any experience of cutting cane by contract? I have. I and my two brothers, in conjunction with relations—a father and two sons—took a contract from a farmer named Broadhurst, at Childers, last season.

849. *By Mr. Nielson*: You wrote a letter to yesterday's *Star*? Yes.

850. *By the Chairman*: Is this your letter in the *Star*? Yes.

851. And that represents your views on the labour question generally? Yes.

852. We will put it in as evidence, and it will save your time and the time of the reporters as well? Yes.

853. The letter referred to appearing in the Bundaberg *Star* of the 3rd of April was as follows:—

THE RATE OF WAGES.

Editor Star.

3-4-06.

SIR,—In this morning's issue of the *Mail* I see the growers and planters have fixed the rate of wages the men have to accept this forthcoming season if we are not in a position to demand more. As a worker, I have no hesitation in saying the rate fixed—viz., 18s. to 25s. per week of 58 hours—is not sufficient to enable a man to rear a family in a reasonable amount of comfort. I wish to point out to the workers that 18s. will be the ruling rate. As we are aware that wages are ruled by the law of "Supply and Demand," if we still continue competing with one another in a glutted market we will never have a possible hope of bettering our conditions. With regard to the prices paid for contract, I venture to inform the farmers, if they still insist on those prices, they will have a great deal of trouble, as I consider the price is far too low to give an inducement for good men to enter into contract with the hope of making a fair wage. As one in conjunction with five mates who took a contract last season to cut and load a farmer's cane in Childers named J. Broadhurst, I will give you an idea of the difference in the price we received and the price they wish us to accept this season. Our contract was for cane trashed and burnt. The prices varied from 2s. 9d. per ton to 3s. 9d.; the price of 2s. 9d. was for stand-over plant cane averaging 33 tons per acre, and I might mention that there were no blocks that did not average 14 tons per acre. We worked from 13th June till 13th December, a term of six calendar months. Mr. J. Broadhurst was perfectly satisfied with the work done and the price paid, and in reply to a question from myself, assured me that he was perfectly satisfied with the white labour conditions as long as the grower received the bounty. Now we have, on the other hand, the prices fixed by the planters last Saturday—viz., for a crop of 20 tons and over, 2s. 9d. per ton; 15 tons and under 20 tons per acre, 3s.; and under 15 tons per acre, 3s. 6d. per ton; these prices are for cutting and loading untrashed cane. I consider the difference in cost of cutting and loading trashed and untrashed cane is at least 1s. per ton; so you will see plainly that the difference in price last season and the price they wish us to accept this coming season is fully 1s. 3d. per ton. Let me inform your readers that Mr. J. Broadhurst paid 1s. per ton for trashing his cane last season. When we consider that a bonus of 4s. 4d. per ton is paid to the grower to enable him to pay a fair wage to white men, I think the grower is taking a mean advantage of the disorganised state of the worker. Mr. J. Broadhurst informed me last season that it cost him 1s. 6d. per ton to harvest his cane, and 1s. per ton to cultivate it, making a total of 2s. 6d. per ton for cultivation and harvesting under black labour conditions: so the position amounts to this, that the grower has 2s. 6d. plus 4s. 4d. bounty, making a total of 6s. 10d. per ton, to cultivate and harvest his cane under white labour conditions, to be in the same position financially as he was previous to the bounty. Allowing 2s. 2d. per ton for cultivation under white labour conditions (which is the estimate of Mr. Aiken), which I consider on the big side, leaves a balance of 4s. 8d. per ton to harvest his cane; so you will see plainly that, instead of the worker getting the benefit of the bounty, the grower is putting a big percentage into his own pocket. In conclusion, let me urge my fellow-workers to come into the ranks of the Union, so that we will not be compelled to accept the starvation wage the growers offer us.

I AM, &c.,

FRED. COURTICE.

2nd April, 1906.

854. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything you wish to add? I only wish to point out that it is only a question of wages and the labour market. There are now approximately between 400 and 500 men at present in this district waiting for the coming crushing season.

855. Where are these men? They are about the district working. Many of these men are married and they cannot work on the plantation in the slack season owing to the miserable wage that is paid them. They get 18s. a week, and they cannot keep a home on that and rear a family. They say it is no use taking on that work under those conditions. They would rather stay in town and do odd jobs, as they can do better there. There are plenty of men working for the council breaking stones, and they are only waiting for the crushing.

856. What wages do the council pay? The council pay 3s. a yard for breaking stones. My brother and myself and another young fellow have been out of work since the completion of our contract on the 13th December, and we reckon the conditions are not good enough on the plantations, and if we can avoid going out there to work we will. We will not go out to these plantations to work unless we are compelled to do so. We spend our time looking for work of a more remunerative character than what it is there. The conditions existing on the plantations are such that no self-respecting man would stop there.

- F. Courtice, 1857. All that will be improved by statute? I hope so.
- 1 April, 1906. 1858. Yesterday we had a witness, and he appeared to be competent to form an opinion on the subject, who mentioned 25s. as being a fair weekly wage, with a bonus of 2s. 6d. In answer to that I say it is impossible to rear a family on a wage like that. We fear to marry, because we know the conditions under which we have to work. The planters take advantage of the glut in the market in the off season, and they give us just sufficient to live on in the crushing season. We cannot get married, because we know we cannot live with any reasonable amount of comfort on wages like they give now. The planters are running the sugar industry as a single man industry, as no married man can work under such conditions.
1859. *By Mr. Paget*: The question has arisen with respect to sugar-workers' homesteads—I am speaking now about the men who are at present walking about looking for work—and it has been considered advisable to ask your opinion as to whether it might be advisable for certain areas of land in our district to be reserved or placed on one side and cut up into small blocks of, say, 10 or 20 acres, for the purpose of allowing men to settle on these blocks and provide homes for themselves, so that they can have their labour available in the cane-fields at any time during the year. You have probably heard of that scheme, and I would like your opinion on it? My opinion with regard to that is that if the planters pay 30s. a week and food they will get sufficient reliable men to take off their cane during the season, but the ultimate solution of the difficulty is that the large estates will have to be cut up into areas of 80 acres, and a small rental charged of 4 or 5 per cent. on the land values. If that were done, then where one man is getting a luxurious living to-day, hundreds would be able to make a comfortable living instead. I heard Mr. Young's evidence yesterday, and I say that the small holdings he suggests could not be worked properly. If the estates were cut up into small blocks, as I suggest, then steam ploughs and other necessary appliances would be bought co-operatively and worked on them. Then those who were on the holdings could rear families and work the holdings themselves.
1860. You would like the mills turned into central mills to receive the cane grown by the farmers? Yes. We find that the successful growers of cane in this district are those who combine manufacture with growing, and if we got the Government to erect a refinery to treat the raw material, the grower would get the full benefit of his produce. Now we see Young Brothers' Fairymead Plantation, and Bingera as well, both worked successfully on those lines because they combine manufacture with growing, and the manufacturer takes advantage of the grower to some extent.
1861. Do they refine the sugar? Yes. They have a refinery at Bingera, as I worked there.
1862. Are you aware they refine raw sugar? Oh, no. If we had a State sugar refinery here, it would help the sugar industry a lot.
1863. *By the Chairman*: Your idea is that the men should be given 80 acres on which to grow cane—Where will you get the land then? If the big estates of Fairymead and Bingera were cut up, men could settle on them and make a living.
1864. That is if the owners are willing to cut them up? Yes, of course.
1865. Could there not be some settlement on the forest land in homestead areas of 160 acres each, where the men could put in their surplus time and still be able to have their labour utilised for the big estates—Could not a scheme like that be worked out? It might to some extent, but I think the other scheme would be best.
1866. *By Mr. Paget*: Have none of these larger estates been cut up in the way you suggest in this district as has been done in the North? They have not been cut up in this district. In some instances land has been leased to leaseholders, but the rent has been unsatisfactory, and the men cannot live under it. The renewal of the lease in five years was optional to the man who leased, so that was an unsatisfactory state of affairs. If the lease was based on the land value it would be more satisfactory than the royalty system.
1867. *By the Chairman*: How would you fix the land value? I would take the land value of the shire councils at present in vogue.
1868. *By Mr. Paget*: Then we come to the supply of labour in connection with the cutting up of the big estates into small farms of, say, 80 acres—Would you say that a man with 80 acres would crush 55 or 60 acres of cane from that every year? Yes.
1869. Even if a farmer had two or three good sons as your father has, I do not think it would be possible for him to handle 55 or 60 acres of cane with his family, so would he not require outside labour as well? No, because I may state that in Childers last year a man had 2,700 tons cut from 150 acres under cultivation. It was a fairly good season, and only six of us were employed, but we harvested all that cane. If a man has two or three sons he can easily harvest it. A mill can only take up to the capacity of what it can crush each day. A man can trash the cane in the slack season, as it ripens the cane and makes it richer. They do not do that now, because they say it will cost too much.
1870. *By the Chairman*: The trashing done like that would make it more liable to be frost bitten, and lead to loss of cane? The cane we cut last year was all trashed and burnt. It results in a small saving to burn it off.
1871. *By Mr. Paget*: Was it trashed before the winter or just before you cut it? Some of it was trashed before we got there, but there were trashers engaged in June, July, and August while we were there.
1872. That is where the difficulty arises. When the cane is trashed during the crushing season it requires extra men for the harvesting? Yes.
1873. *By the Chairman*: Have you ever done any trashing? There was a block last year that was not quite finished—2 or 3 acres of a 20-ton crop—and Mr. Broadhurst asked us if we would trash it, because there were not sufficient trucks to keep us going. He allowed us 1s. a ton, but we saw in a very short time that it would not pay us at less than 1s. 3d. a ton, so we said we would wait till it got burned, and we would have a spell.
1874. *By Mr. Paget*: We have hitherto been discussing the case of the farmer with a family of grown-up sons, like yours, but what about the farmer who has not a grown-up family? At present, the farmer takes advantage of the glut in the labour market, and men are compelled to work for him. I know of farmers paying men 16s. a week now, and they are good men, too. You cannot expect men to be reliable if they can get anything better. If I was forced to work for the wages they are offering men, I would make it my business to get out as soon as possible.
1875. The point I wish to get some information upon is this—Can you tell me how it is possible to keep the men in the district during slack times who are absolutely necessary during the busier times? The best method I can suggest is to pay them fair wages, and then you will get an abundance of men.

F. Courtice.

4 April, 1906.

876. *By the Chairman*: You think a fair wage is 30s. a week? Yes.

877. Others think 25s. a week a fair wage? Last Saturday some thought 18s. a fair wage. Is that a fair wage to offer a man who has to rear a family?

878. Would you be willing to live 10 or 12 miles away on a plantation, or would you prefer to live in town? If the conditions were fair outside I would go outside. If they would give me 30s. a week and proper rations—not the rations they dole out now—I would go out if I could not get anything better. I think they would get abundance of labour if they would pay 30s. a week.

879. *By Mr. Paget*: The information I want from you is whether it would not be better for a man to have a home where he could go during slack times than to stay at a hotel and spend the money he earns on the plantations? Certainly. I think any man would rather have a home of his own; but to get over the difficulty I say the men should have their holdings on the plantations.

880. That is a different matter—that is connected with the question of getting the cane supplied to the mills by small farmers. The point on which I want your opinion is with regard to smaller holdings that are not for the purpose of growing cane. Assuming that the land that is available is not suitable for agriculture, but that it is suitable for residential sites of 10 acres, on which something might be done in the way of keeping some poultry, or pigs, or a cow or two? That would be an advantage.

881. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you studied whether the industry is of value to Queensland or Australia as an industry? As an industry I believe it is of value.

882. Have you gone into figures with regard to the economic aspect of the industry as a whole, and having regard to the conditions under which it now exists?—Could it pay the rate of wages you speak of? Yes. I have just proved that by telling you what was done for the planter I worked for last season. In addition to paying us wages, he paid his landlord 30s. an acre as rental.

883. What did he get for his cane? It was paid for on the basis of analysis.

884. What did he get? He got different prices.

885. Do you know the average price per ton? I think he averaged about 13s. a ton, minus the bonus—he received 4s. 6d. as bonus.

886. Was it delivered at the mill? It was delivered at the main line just alongside his farm.

887. He had no distance to cart it? No.

888. Had he portable tramlines in his fields? Yes.

889. Do you know the Woongarra Scrub? I think so.

890. Do you know the price paid there last year for cane? I am not aware of it.

891. Supposing that it did not exceed 12s. 6d. a ton delivered at the mill, could the small farmers in the scrub afford to pay as good wages as the man you worked for, who got more money for his cane, and had portable tramlines into his fields? He could pay as much as the planter paid us. He made money out of us through the bonus. He assured me that it paid him to employ white men, and that he would rather have white men working for him; that it cost him more, plus the bonus, with black labour than with us, and he was perfectly satisfied if the grower got the bounty.

892. Do you think that the present bounty is necessary for the existence of the industry? Under present conditions.

893. To work the industry with white labour, I mean? With the present excise duty, I think that the bonus will not be necessary if the price of cane sugar keeps as it is, and all sugar is produced by white men, provided the manufacturer gives the same price for the cane, plus the bounty, to the farmer when the white labour conditions prevail throughout Queensland.

894. How do you propose to maintain the price of sugar? With the present protective duty. Some steps will have to be taken, I anticipate, when the output of sugar in Australia exceeds the consumption. I do not know exactly what those steps should be.

895. Do you think that protection through the Customs will be just as good as the present system of bonus? I do not think so. I think the farmer will have to watch his interests pretty closely.

896. You are aware that under the present system the bounty goes direct to the grower? Yes.

897. Do you think that beneficial? Yes.

898. You quite understand that there are some factors governing the cost of production of cane besides labour. For instance, suppose a farmer in the Woongarra Scrub is working on land valued at £16 an acre, and he is rated at 24d in the £, he will be paying a rate of over 3s. an acre, whilst in another part of the district the same weight of cane is grown on land which may be paying only 4d. an acre in rates? But the rates are based on the value of the land.

899. But the value of the land does not depend upon its capabilities for growing cane—the situation has a lot to do with it? But it is no good valuing land unless on the basis of its earning power. We are talking about sugar lands and not about town sites. I do not think it matters whether it is 2 miles or 10 miles away.

900. *By Mr. Paget*: Assuming that the Millaquin refinery was a cane mill, it would be in a better position with regard to shipping its raw sugar than a mill 10 miles away, and the latter would be at a disadvantage, and the cane it treated would be of less value than the cane treated at the Millaquin mill? Yes, and the land would be proportionately of less value; and, if a rate were struck on the land values, it would get over that difficulty. The further the land is away from the mill, so it loses in value.

901. *By Mr. Nielson*: You think the average small farmer could pay 30s. a week and rations all the year round? I do.

902. Equally as well as the big plantations with their mills? Yes, with good men.

903. *By the Chairman*: Do you think a small farmer with three grown-up sons would ever grow a stick of cane himself if they could all get 30s. a week and rations all the year round? I do. I have an ambition to get on the land myself, but I know that under the conditions that prevail I can never get the capital to go on the land. Mr. Nott wants to bring 10,000 men out here, but what on earth is the good of bringing 10,000 men here when there are plenty of men here who would take the work if they were only offered inducements? If they bring out 10,000 men, they will have to be single men, or they cannot live on the wages offered. The planters take advantage of the glut in the labour market in the slack season. At Bonna they were paying 16s. and 18s. a week, and, if the men went out early in the morning and worked for two or three hours and then got a wetting and had to knock off, they got no pay. I believe that at Bingera they docked a man's wages when he was wet, and they charged the men for meals, and then they expect a married man to live under such conditions.

F. Courtice. 904. *By Mr. Paget*: But that is not the usual procedure? Yes; the usual procedure is to keep the men as low as possible. They take all sorts of advantages of the glutted state of the market. Last year 4 April, 1906. the small growers paid 30s. a week and found, and Applin Bros. at Gin Gin did the same.

905. *By the Chairman*: That is during harvesting: but you are talking of all the year round? Yes.
906. Did the people you speak of only pay that rate during harvesting? Yes. I do not know what they pay during the slack season.

907. *By Mr. Nielson*: I suppose you are aware that many small farmers do not pay their sons any wages at all? Well, if I had a farm, and I could not afford to pay my son wages, I would consider that the sooner I chucked it up the better.

908. *By the Chairman*: It is not that they cannot pay their sons wages, but whether they give them the same wages as they give others? Well, if my father would not give me wages, I would go off where I could get wages.

HENRY ALBERT CATTERMULL, Farmer, Woongarra Scrub, examined:

H. A.
Cattermull.

909. *By the Chairman*: What acreage have you under crop? About 200 acres.

910. What did you harvest last year? About 2,500 tons.

911. From how many acres? About 130 acres.

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912. How did you cut it? By day labour.

913. Black or white? White.

914. What wages did you pay? From 25s. to 33s. 6d. and rations.

915. Any bonus? That included a bonus of 3s. 6d. a week.

916. How many men did you employ, on the average, during the crushing season? Twelve or fourteen.

917. Had you any difficulty in getting suitable labour? Not too much difficulty. I engaged my labour four months beforehand.

918. Were the men residents in this locality? No; they were farmers' sons from Beenleigh way.

919. *By Mr. Paget*: Had they worked for you before? Some of them had.

920. And they brought their friends along with them? Yes.

921. What acreage do you expect to cut this year? About 200 acres.

922. Have you made arrangements for labour yet? Not yet.

923. Do you expect that there will be any difficulty in getting labour? There will be a little trouble this time, I think.

924. For you? I do not expect much difficulty myself.

925. You expect to get the labour you require from the same source as before? Yes.

926. Why do you expect there may be some difficulty in getting sufficient labour in the coming season? A lot of the men walking about are quite willing to work, but there are others who will not work. If they get a few shillings they go to the first hotel and knock it down.

927. *By the Chairman*: Is there a proportion of the men who are unsuitable for the work? When a man has been walking about for five or six months, with no suitable food in his stomach, when he goes to work he cannot do a day's work alongside another man who has been kept going all the year round.

928. Then many men are physically unfit owing to conditions over which they have no control? They have control, but they waste their money. I do not say that applies to all cases, but it does in lots of cases.

929. Some of them are actually starving through their own improvidence? Yes.

930. If those men were in good physical condition, they would be as able to do the work as another man? They would be far better able to do it.

931. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you suggest any means by which that condition of things might be improved? The sugar industry will always require a floating population. You can always give more work during the crushing season than in the slack season, and hence the trouble.

932. But cannot you suggest any scheme by which the floating population can be converted into a fixed population, settled in the sugar districts, with profit to themselves and to the industry? If sufficient inducements were offered to the men to go on the land, and there was plenty of land available to give them homesteads on which they could work during the slack season, whilst they worked on the plantations during the crushing season, it would settle the difficulty a lot.

933. *By the Chairman*: What area would you consider sufficient to offer a man for that purpose, supposing it was only grazing land? A man with a family would require 150 acres. He would require to run a few cows and a horse or two, and possibly he might find a few acres fit for cultivation.

934. *By Mr. Paget*: On which he might grow a crop like maize? Yes.

935. *By the Chairman*: You think that a man, under those circumstances, might occupy his time on his homestead, when he was not working for wages? There would be some inducement for him to go in for it, if he could get four, five, or six months' work on a plantation or in a mill and earn sufficient money to improve his property and keep his home together. That would be far better than that he should walk about the country doing nothing.

936. How long have you lived in this part of the country? About nineteen years.

937. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you been farming the whole time? Yes.

938. *By Mr. Nielson*: How long have you harvested cane with white labour? Since the commencement of the Act, in 1902.

939. What is your opinion of working the industry with white labour? If you can get suitable labour and a fair price for your cane it is all right.

940. Do white men give satisfaction as workers in the industry? In nearly every case my men have given me satisfaction.

941. What can you afford to pay field hands in the off season? £1 a week and rations.

942. What is the reason you cannot afford to pay more? The industry will not allow you to pay more. In the harvesting time, when the crop is assured, you can pay more wages. In the slack time the work is not so heavy as in the crushing, and the hours are not so long, and you may work six months and get nothing.

943. Are you prepared to pay the same wages this year as you paid last? I am.

944. You know the district pretty well? Yes.

945. Can you find 150-acre blocks to put the men on? Well, you can find plenty of blocks of 150 acres which could not be cultivated; but a man wants sufficient inducement to go on the land. You could

not expect him to go on the land and not own it. Let him be able to make it his own and make a home on it.

H. A.
Cattermull.

946. *By Mr. Nielson*: What amount of inducement do you suggest? If he resided on the ground, and took his wife and family, I would give him the ground for five years free, and would not put too stringent conditions on it. If a man lived there for five years he would put a house and fencing on the land, and would otherwise improve it. He would be bound to put a certain amount of improvements there.

947. *By Mr. Paget*: The Minister refused to accept an amendment to that effect last session? Yes.

948. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think that with the price of cane which has obtained in the Woongarra district in the last couple of seasons, that would enable you to pay a higher rate of wages than you paid? No, we could not.

949. *By Mr. Paget*: What price were you paid for the cane? 12s. 6d.

950. And the bonus of 4s. 6d.? Yes.

951. *By Mr. Nielson*: That was the maximum price paid? Yes.

952. That was the price paid delivered at the mill? Yes, delivered at the mill by dray.

953. *By the Chairman*: Can you suggest any way by which the quality of the floating labour can be improved—you say that these men are wandering about looking for work and are miserable and not fit to go into harness—can you suggest any way by which that might be altered without difficulty? The remedy is to settle them on the land.

954. What about the single men who have no inducement to go on the land? The men who wander about do not care to work. Generally speaking, if a man cares to work he can find a job. There are men and men. Last year I paid a good wage to picked men. Some others came along and we paid them 25s. a week. They worked for a few days and then said that the work was too hard for them, whereas if they had stopped they would have got their 30s. a week.

955. You say that if a man does not get sufficient work and food it is his own fault? In lots of cases it is their own fault.

956. Because they do not like work? Yes, because they do not like work; work and those men fell out long ago. There is one thing that I would like to say about the conditions in which the white workers find themselves. They complain of bad tucker. I would like to point out that last year and for several years there were one or two instances where the men were allowed pickles. In one instance, where the men were supplied with pickles, one man took the bottle and emptied the whole of the pickles on to his plate. That sort of thing does not tend to encourage employers to give them things of that kind. These are the men who do not want work. They only want money, so that they can go to the hotel and knock it down.

FREDERICK COURTICE, Organiser of the Sugar Workers' Union, re-examined:

957. *By Mr. Nielson*: From your experience of men, do they object to camp in tents? Yes, they would rather camp in houses, so far as I know. I know I would myself.

F. Courtice.

958. *By the Chairman*: Do you not think that the average tent would be cleaner than the average house of that description, and drier, and more private? We had a house at Childers last year for six of us, and we preferred it.

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959. *By Mr. Paget*: In the Shearers and Sugar Workers Accommodation Act one of the regulations, I believe, provides that tents may be provided in the case of men cutting in gangs where they can be shifted from one farm to another—the men would not have any great objection to tents under those conditions, would they? No.

960. In some instances a farmer has not the accommodation to house a number of men for a short period, and they would not have any objection to tents under those conditions, would they? I do not think so.

961. *By the Chairman*: Is there any difficulty in getting men for the road gangs here? No, my father is the ganger for the Barolin Shire.

962. And they live in tents and are glad to get back to them? Yes, they live in tents, and like to get back to them when their work is finished.

963. The work on the road gangs is hard, but I suppose they take it because it is constant? Yes, and it is better paid for, and they get better rations. With regard to what the last witness said about pickles, I have worked on several plantations, and I have never seen pickles supplied to the men. Pickles are not supplied on Bingera or Fairymead. At Fairymead, two years ago, we were in the mechanics' quarters, and for breakfast we had bread and beef and a drop of gravy, but no jam. We had jam twice a week and "duff" twice a week. I have never seen pickles on a plantation yet, and I know that at the general run of them pickles are not supplied.

HENRY ST. GEORGE CAULFIELD, Assistant Immigration Agent and Polynesian Inspector at Bundaberg, examined:

964. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of the district under your control? It runs about 33 miles in one direction and 20 miles in the other.

H. St. G.
Caulfield.

965. It includes all the sugar lands? Yes; all the sugar areas.

966. Can you give us the approximate number of Pacific Islanders in that district? Those under engagement now number about 700.

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967. There are a large number in addition to that? There are 400 others outside that number. There are about 1,100 in the district.

968. *By Mr. Paget*: You tell us that there are 700 under agreement; how many of that number are three-year islanders, and how many re-engagements? Only about sixty of the islanders are three-year islanders.

969. *By the Chairman*: You are preparing a return showing the names of these islanders and the localities to which these 700 islanders belong? Yes, I am preparing that return.

970. It is not available yet? No.

971. The original agreement states that all islanders shall be returned to their islands? Yes.

972. This condition has been strictly construed to return the islander to a certain spot on the island—to a certain "passage"? Yes, to his own "passage".

973. What is the meaning of that word "passage"? It is the particular "passage" or portion of the beach that his people are accustomed to resort to.

974. *By Mr. Paget*: That is the form of agreement in Schedule G? Yes.

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Caulfield.

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975. *By the Chairman*: Is there not some reserve or some neutral ground for the hill-men to use? Yes.
976. The hill-men would be lauded there? They ask to be landed there.
977. *By Mr. Paget*: In the register are those hill-men entered up as coming from that one particular "passage"? Yes; and all through from his arrival to his departure we are careful not to deviate from his "passage." We notice that in the case of the hill-men and the saltwater-men too.
978. That is the "passage" they embark from? Yes; we always resort to that if there is any doubt.
979. *By the Chairman*: To ensure compliance with this condition as to landing, a Government agent accompanies each vessel returning Pacific Islanders? Yes.
980. By what means is provision made for defraying the cost of returning the islanders? That has been secured under bond, and is enforceable on the expiration of the original term of introduction of three years.
981. *By Mr. Paget*: Does the bond mention any specific sum for the return passage money? Yes, it mentions £5, and the bondsmen are liable for it.
982. *By the Chairman*: In some instances that £5 is collected? It is always collected. I would like to qualify what I have said. If an islander at the end of his three-year term elects to go home, we turn round to the introducer, who is liable, and ask him to arrange with the agents for the ship. It may be more than £5 and he arranges it. But if the islander elects to stay in Queensland, his passage money is collected. If an islander says he will go home, and at the end of a month or two he does not go, we collect the £5, because in course of time he would pass out of our hands altogether.
983. That £5 is put into a fund? Yes, the Pacific Island Department Fund.
984. *By Mr. Paget*: It is entered as a credit for the return passage of each islander to pay his passage back at any time he may choose to return to the islands? That is so.
985. *By the Chairman*: Have you any record of the number of islanders in this district who are exempt under the statute? I reckon there are between forty or fifty.
986. Have you got their names? Not just now.
987. Can you get their names? I have a register of the names, but whether they are in this district or not I cannot say. They have passed out of our control now.
988. How do we get these names in Brisbane? I can give you a list of those who left and those who died.
989. Will you get it for us? Yes.
990. *By Mr. Paget*: It will show those who were exempt under the 1881 Act? Yes.
991. *By the Chairman*: Have you any knowledge of any exemptions granted by the Right Hon. G. H. Reid, the late Prime Minister of the Commonwealth? No.
992. *By Mr. Paget*: You know some were granted under special conditions? No.
993. *By the Chairman*: There were some? I do not know of them.
994. Are there any islanders settled here as farmers or gardeners? No, I have not heard of any.
995. Have you any in other occupations? We have one shopkeeper.
996. What is his name? Charlie Methol.
997. And his island? He is an Ambrym boy.
998. Can you tell me how many are married in this district? There are fourteen married.
999. Can you give us a return showing the names of those who are married? Yes, I can prepare that for you.
1000. *By Mr. Paget*: Are there any islanders married to white women? One.
1001. *By the Chairman*: Will you get us the particulars in that case also? Yes.
1002. *By Mr. Paget*: Has that man any children? Yes.
1003. *By the Chairman*: We would like to get all the particulars about that case, and particularly with regard to the offspring, as it is essential we should know all about it. I will get those for you.
1004. *By Mr. Paget*: With regard to those fourteen islanders who are married, have they any families? Yes, they have a few children, but not many.
1005. Do they attend the State school? Yes.
1006. That is where the school is within a reasonable distance? Yes.
1007. *By the Chairman*: We shall have a full return of them? Yes.
1008. Do you know of any infirm islanders whom it would be cruel or inadvisable to send back to their islands? I do not know any infirm islanders.
1009. Can you tell us how many have been repatriated within the last fifteen months? Yes, I can tell you the exact number sent away from this port, and can differentiate between the districts they came from. There were 104 sent away from this port, from this district, and 345 from other districts, making altogether 449 who were sent away from this port last year. That includes 345 Northern "boys."
1010. *By Mr. Paget*: As against the number returned from Bundaberg last year, how do the "returns" tally this year for the three months just ended; is the number of "returns" greater than it was in the same period of last year? Yes, there are more going back.
1011. How many have gone away from this district in the last three months? We have only had one departure, but I could get that information for you. I have got it handy.
1012. *By the Chairman*: Are there any number of men awaiting repatriation? There are fully 400 waiting.
1013. Waiting to be reshipped? Waiting developments.
1014. They are not anxious to go home? No, they are not anxious.
1015. What is the average cost of sending back these islanders now that the engagement of islanders has ceased? £7.
1016. *By Mr. Paget*: From the port of shipment? Yes.
1017. *By the Chairman*: And you have only got £5 in hand towards that? We have got £5 in hand; but we collect the extra cost from the employer.
1018. Suppose an islander comes here from Northern ports, who pays his fare down? His last employer. Under a recent circular, the last employer is liable.
1019. He was not made liable until recently? No; not until recently.
1020. *By the Chairman*: What in your opinion is the preferable means of repatriating these men—by steamer or schooner? Personally, I think it would be better to let them return under the conditions that have always been in operation.
1021. That is by schooner? Yes; by schooner. My reasons against any change are that it would be inadvisable. We have to consider this thing from a good many standpoints. It would be inadvisable to land men at places where they are liable to be short of food.

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1022. You think it would be better to return them by schooner because there would not be so many returned at one time? Yes; conditions would then be normal.

1023. How many vessels are there engaged in returning the islanders now? Three; the "Lady Norman," the "Ivanhoe," and the "Sydney Belle." The "Lady Norman" is an auxiliary steamer.

1024. Have you heard any complaints made as to the regulations of the Commissioner in the Solomon Islands hampering operations and increasing the cost of repatriation? I have heard a good deal from the ships' captains, and I have my own point of view of the operations, as it operates against us.

1025. In what way? For instance, formerly they objected to taking both lots of islanders—say, islanders from the Solomons and the New Hebrides—in the one vessel.

1026. *By Mr. Paget:* It would be an advantage to take "boys" for both places? Yes; it helped to fill up the ship. The Commissioner at the Solomon Islands has now introduced a system that, if vessels bringing returning islanders have on board "boys" for the Solomons and the New Hebrides both, then they must report themselves at Gavutu, in the Solomon Islands, first. The captain of the vessel has then to pay a license fee of £60, and this license lasts for six months.

1027. *By the Chairman:* What is the license for? It is a recruiting license, and it is still in operation, although recruiting has stopped and the vessel just calls there to land the islanders. It covers a period of six months, and if the vessel remains after that period it has to pay another fee of £40. That license fee does not operate in the New Hebrides, but only in the Solomon Group.

1028. Would it not be the quicker way to go to the New Hebrides first, and then go up to the Solomon Islands? They always worked that way in those days, because they would get the wind to the Solomons and "get a slant" right up through the group. I am not a nautical man, but that is what I have been told.

1029. And if they go to the Solomon Islands first, they have to beat back to the New Hebrides? Yes.

1030. Have you any personal knowledge of the conditions of life in the Solomon Islands? I have no personal knowledge, and I only know what I get from the "boys."

1031. How many years' experience have you had of these islands? Nineteen years.

1032. And you have come into frequent contact with the "boys," the masters of vessels, and Government agents? Yes, constantly.

1033. *By the Chairman:* From the information you acquire in that way, can you say that danger to life would result from landing the "boys" at a "passage" where they are strangers? Yes; and I can give you an instance I have just heard: A "boy" told me that a "boy" belonging to Kwai, on Malaya Island, who went back in the "Ivanhoe" in April last, was killed. I looked it up, and I found that the "boy" did leave here in April of last year. Last night a man came to my place and told me that this "boy" had been killed by the saltwater men.

1034. *By Mr. Paget:* Where was he landed? At Kwai; at his own "passage." I went further into the matter, and asked if the man was killed because of his box. I was told that this was not so; but a Kwai "boy" had previously killed a saltwater "boy," and this poor fellow, who had returned from Queensland, had to pay the penalty. Now that is a case I heard of only last night. It is a case in point. I would also like to bring under the notice of the Commission that just before the "Sydney Belle" sailed from this port, four "boys" were brought up to me by a "boy," who acted as a sort of spokesman, and he asked me to tell the Government agent to be very careful about the landing of these men, because, as he put it, they would be killed.

1035. *By the Chairman:* What island was that? Malaya. The spokesman also said, "My countrymen no protected." I could not get out of him what the offence was. I took the Government agent aside and reported the whole of the circumstances to him, and instructed him to be most careful in the handling of these particular islanders. That happened in connection with the "Sydney Belle."

1036. These men run a great risk in returning to their islands? Undoubtedly they do, under certain circumstances.

1037. From that you might assume that there might be cases in which it would be absolutely inhuman to send these men back to their islands against their wish? Certainly, without a doubt.

1038. *By Mr. Paget:* With regard to the islanders who have been in Queensland for fifteen or twenty years it is probable that great danger would result from their being landed at their original "passages"? I can only answer that by telling you what the islanders told me, and that is that they have lost touch with their people at their own "passages." In some cases their people may have been swept out altogether.

1039. Another tribe has perhaps swept the village out? Yes, and probably it may not exist as a village. Then, again, probably the newcomers will not be welcome, and, as they say, "Where we get 'em ki li?"

1040. If those people were returning after an absence of several years, even if their own people were not swept out, would the chief of their tribe allow them a piece of land on which to get their food? I do not think so.

1041. *By the Chairman:* What would be the effect on the food supply if a large number of islanders were suddenly landed at a place? I think it would upset the normal conditions. It is a common thing to find an entry like this in a ship's log: "Unable to get native food owing to shortage." If you are going to send a lot of men to a place, your action will tend to aggravate that sort of thing.

1042. Would the landing of a supply of food, such as flour or rice, with the returning islanders mitigate the inconvenience? I think it would be a very humane thing to do.

1043. But, on the other hand, might not such a step have the effect of inducing tribal fights over those provisions? If I were landing anything like that, I would find out who was the proper person to take charge of the distribution. I would not hand the stores out indiscriminately—there is always a chief in authority.

1044. *By Mr. Paget:* But is it not possible that, if a quantity of food were landed in that way, it would be wasted, or would it be saved up for a time of scarcity? I would only land food on the understanding that a depot was formed and placed under proper control.

1045. *By the Chairman:* Under the control of an official? Under the control of a Queensland Government official.

1046. To constitute a relief depot? Yes.

1047. Would it be wise to regulate the return of the islanders to their respective islands in such a manner that one company of "returners" had time to settle down in their new surroundings before taking a second company to the same place? I think it would be only right to consider their conditions as well as our

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own. I have a scheme which I will put before the Commission which might possibly get over that difficulty.

1048. *By Mr. Paget:* Will you submit it in writing? I will.
1049. *By the Chairman:* What interval of time would you allow to elapse before sending a second lot of men to a place? I do not think it would be right to land another lot for three or four months. It would be too great a tax.

1050. But assuming that deportation is to take effect immediately after 31st December next, you could not give effect to such a scheme as that? You could not.

1051. Would danger to life arise in the event of an islander taking back with him a wife belonging to another island? Certainly there would. He might be perfectly willing to protect her, or to protect friend, but he is only one. I have had such cases come under my notice.

1052. The woman would be almost sure to be killed or maltreated? Yes. It would be very ill-advised to allow anything of that sort. The white woman I referred to wanted to go down to the islands, but I gave her my opinion on the subject, and she gave up the idea—for the time being, at all events.

1053. *By Mr. Paget:* The department does not countenance landing women under such circumstances? No; it would be very ill-advised policy.

1054. In fact, the Act strictly forbids it? The Minister would have to be consulted before a thing like that was done.

1055. *By the Chairman:* Are you cognisant of any arrangements which are projected for the maintenance of the islanders after 31st December next until they can be repatriated? No. I take it we are in a No. Thoroughfare, so to speak. The Act will be dead, and the liabilities imposed by the Act will cease to be operative after 31st December. The men will have to be maintained either at their own cost or by the authorities.

1056. *By Mr. Nielson:* Does your scheme contain any suggestion for that? My scheme would alleviate all that.

1057. *By the Chairman:* Under ordinary circumstances, the last employer of an islander is bound to support him until an opportunity occurs for his deportation? Bound to support him in every way.

1058. In the past that has often been got over by the employer employing the islander until the next ship went? Yes, he has been able to do that.

1059. How do the islanders view this compulsory deportation? Some of them are absolutely indifferent, others resent it very keenly, and come to me about it. One man wrote to me from Gladstone the other day. I submitted his letter to the authorities, and meantime I took it upon myself to tell him that he might rest assured that nothing inhuman would be done to him; and I am happy to say the reply I got from the Government was of the same nature.

1060. *By Mr. Paget:* Had he been long in this country? Yes, a good many years.

1061. Had he settled down in Queensland? Yes, he desired to do so.

1062. *By the Chairman:* Is there any likelihood of resistance to deportation?—Are the boys likely to forcibly resist being placed on board ship? It is highly probable.

1063. Is there any probability of the question being tested in the High Court? They have told me they are prepared to go as far as that.

1064. Have you heard of threats of reprisals for their enforced deportation? Yes. It was reported to me from the islands, and I heard it from one or two other sources. It is only from Tanna that I have heard of it, I am glad to say, and not from Malaya, where I should have expected it. The Tanna men resent it very much, and say that, if their countrymen are deported, they will murder every white man on Tanna.

1065. Did you receive that information from an authentic source? It came to me from a source that I do not doubt.

1066. Would it be advisable to book the names of a limited number of islanders as "returns" for a certain island, with a fair certainty that they would not change their minds before the ship sailed? I think so. If they gave the inspector of the port at least a month's notice of what they intended to do, he could put matters in train. When once they say they will go, they will go.

1067. Could a vessel be sure of getting her full complement? Yes, if you take the two groups. I take it we must get over that obstacle about the Solomons, and we must be able to fill up a ship with islanders for the two groups, just as they could in the old days.

1068. *By Mr. Paget:* What is the Commissioner's objection to the ships going to the New Hebrides first? I think it arose in the first instance through our having measles in Queensland. I believe that furnished a pretext; but latterly it has been a revenue-producing expedient.

1069. Has it not been said that the islanders take firearms from the New Hebrides to the Solomons with greater facility than they can from Queensland? I believe that has been said.

1070. *By the Chairman:* During what seasons of the year can vessels most suitably trade with the islands? When we were favoured with our old seasons—which I hope are coming back again—we used to avoid January and February, and sometimes March.

1071. Those are the hurricane months? Yes. The vessels were then laid up.

1072. Assuming that those seasons are coming back again, practically deportation cannot commence until April next year? Not if we get anything like a normal season next year. Of course, a steamer could get over that difficulty. I am talking of sailing vessels. It would not matter so much with a steamer, as she can risk certain things, get over the ground quicker, and get a safer anchorage.

1073. There will be enhanced risks though? Undoubtedly, in the New Hebrides—not so much in the Solomons.

1074. Would it be possible to obtain a list of islanders who, whilst unwilling to return to their own islands, would consent to forego their right to be returned, and who would be prepared to be landed on some other island where work and a reasonable measure of safety to life could be secured? Yes. There are some cases in which that would be very applicable in regard to the New Hebrides.

1075. Men who knew it was unsafe to return to their own islands could find work and homes somewhere else? I think you could do something in the neighbourhood of where Captain Rason has his headquarters, and where it would be under his eye.

1076. That would be on Sandwich? Yes. That would be a very suitable place, and it is in constant touch with the various islands in the group, and they might remain there till it was all right to go to their own homes.

1077. We have information that there is scope for the absorption of a great deal of labour on Sandwich? Yes; there is a good demand for labour there. H. St. G. Caulfield.
1078. *By Mr. Paget*: How would you get over the difficulty in regard to the Solomons? It would be a difficult matter, and would require very grave consideration; but the New Hebrides and the Solomons cannot be placed on the same footing. You have to handle the Solomons question very carefully. The islanders would be perfectly safe in the New Hebrides with Captain Rason there. 4 April, 1906.
1079. *By the Chairman*: Do you think it would be possible to explain to Pacific Islanders that they would have to consider that place their home? Yes.
1080. And that faith had not been broken with them? I could easily explain that.
1081. Have you any knowledge of the extent to which the Imperial officials in the New Hebrides and the Solomons exercise supervision over the interests of locally indentured labour? I think it is part of their duty. They practically occupy the same position there with the islanders that I do here.
1082. Then the men's interests would be perfectly protected? Yes.
1083. Have you any knowledge of the market for island labour in Fiji? There is a keen demand there for Pacific Islanders.
1084. Would the interests of the islanders be perfectly protected there? I think so.
1085. *By Mr. Paget*: I understood that the sugar-growers in Fiji were now employing Indian coolies instead of Pacific Islanders? I understand that they have been doing so lately.
1086. They have rather given up employing Pacific Islanders? Yes.
1087. *By Mr. Nielson*: During the years when "boys" were being recruited, "returns" were killed and maltreated, the same as now? That danger has always existed.
1088. Has it not come to your knowledge that there are some fugitive offenders amongst the islanders here? I believe that is so.
1089. A fair proportion of them came to Queensland to escape punishment on their own islands? I have often thought so.
1090. I suppose they are the men who are mostly molested on their return? Yes.
1091. In the case of a white man belonging to another civilised country, we would send him back to his own country to be punished? That would be on a par.
1092. With the kanaka you think it is not advisable to send him back if he is an offender? I do not say that. If a man does not want to land, he must be brought back, and let the authorities settle what is to be done with him. You cannot leave him on the beach to be killed.
1093. *By the Chairman*: Even although if he was guilty of a breach of his native laws? I certainly would not land him there.
1094. *By Mr. Paget*: But the authorities here are not cognisant of the fact that he is an offender? Quite so. Of course, if they had properly constituted authorities, it would be a simple matter of extradition, but you cannot apply that in this case.
1095. *By Mr. Nielson*: Your remarks on the food supply are confined to the little local districts to which the "boys" belong, and not to the islands? I only referred to the local requirements.
1096. Malaya, for instance, is a fertile island. Is it not a fact that any shortage in their food supplies is due to their own improvidence and want of cultivation? Yes; they do not store up.
1097. Have you ever heard whether the "boys" who have returned from Queensland are better cultivators than those on the island who have never been here? Cases have come under my notice where "boys" who have returned from Queensland have endeavoured to instil a little bit of the ideas inculcated here into their fellow-islanders, but it has been knocked out of them pretty quickly. There are too many socialists about there.
1098. Are there many "boys" in this district married to women of different tribes to their own? I do not think there are many, but I can get you definite information on that point.
1099. If a "boy" marries a woman who did not belong to his island, are you consulted in the matter? They usually come to me, and I always try to get them to forego the idea; but handling matters like that, even with a dark skin, is not easy, and they will not always take my advice, though they have done so sometimes.
1100. *By Mr. Paget*: Do they ask you to marry them? They ask my consent to the cash part of the business.
1101. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do they regard a marriage contracted here as in any way different to a marriage in their own islands? No; it is just as binding from their point of view.
1102. Until they want to sell out? Yes, unless they think there is a cash value attachable.
1103. Numerous instances, I suppose, have come under your notice of where a "boy" has bartered his wife to another "boy" for cash? Yes. I consider that they look upon the Queensland marriage in a very different light to what they do marriages contracted in their own islands. For instance, I have known of a man whose real wife came to Queensland unexpectedly, and when this gentleman found it out, he very quickly severed the Queensland connection in order to take up with his original wife, because she was insisting on the fulfilment of his part of the compact. That showed me that he looked on the second with very different eyes, and that he considered the Queensland marriage as the less binding of the two.
1104. Have the "boys" who have been married here been married according to the law of Queensland? Some of them have been married in accordance with our laws and in our churches.
1105. Were you consulted in those cases? No. I have been asked to break one; but, when the marriage certificate was produced, I told them they were asking me to do far more than I or anyone else could do except a judge.
1106. Did they belong to different islands? No, both belonged to the same island.
1107. *By the Chairman*: I suppose we can be supplied with full particulars regarding these marriages from the head office in Brisbane? They get the particulars from the local inspectors.
1108. Then we must get the information as we go along? Yes.
1109. *By Mr. Nielson*: Why did you dissuade the white woman you spoke of from going to the islands? Because I thought it would be dangerous for her. The "boy" might be desirous of protecting her, and he might try his level best to do so, but he was only one, and he might be knocked on the head next.
1110. Were they legally married? So I understood.

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1111. By a clergyman? I believe so.

1112. Do you know whether there is not a great demand for labour in the Solomons? There is a very good demand there.

1113. Have you not heard that they are very anxious that all the "boys" from Queensland should be landed there? I have not heard it officially, but I believe the desire exists in certain quarters. I should certainly strongly object to it.

1114. Have you ever heard whether there is a desire to get all the kanakas from Queensland landed there so as to engage them in work instead of sending them to their own "passages"? I believe that is the idea, and it would be very ill-advised on the part of the Queensland Government to countenance it.

1115. Do you know whether the firm of Lever Brothers operate in the Solomons? Yes. They have a very large interest there.

1116. Are they on Sandwich? For all I know they may have a branch there.

1117. They are large employers of labour? Very large. They get a good many of their labourers from the Northern Solomons—Bougainville, Ysabel, and those islands.

1118. You say you do not think the kanakas will change their minds once they have determined to go—As a matter of fact, a few months ago did not a number of kanakas on a boat here change their minds and walk ashore after they had been on board for some days? I am referring now to totally different conditions. I am now giving you what I think will be the position when we arrive at 31st December. If you ask me whether a kanaka will change his mind between now and 31st December, I say, "Ask me something easy." But after 31st December, if he says he will go, he will go. They are just like children. I have had hundreds of them come to me and say, "I go home to-day." I put him down as "going" on his last pay-sheet, and three or four days afterwards he says he wants to stop here.

1119. By Mr. Paget: And he engages with another employer? Yes. Under our present conditions it would be very hard to say what they will do, but under the altered conditions which will exist after 31st December, I take it they will be off.

1120. By Mr. Nielson: A few months ago some "boys" left a ship? They have done that on several occasions.

1121. Have you any means of preventing that? No.

1122. If you used your influence as inspector, do you not think they would change their minds? It all depends on what was their reason for leaving the ship—you have to find that out first of all.

1123. Do you know why they left that particular ship? No; I do not know what ship you are referring to.

1124. I think there is an official report in Brisbane from this office? The other day "boys" changed ships completely. The Solomon Islanders came up from Maryborough, and the New Hebrides "boys" went down to the Maryborough boat. That was simply owing to a feud.

1125. You are aware that a lot of "boys" whose agreements were cancelled in this district within the last few months, instead of returning home, went North? Yes.

1126. Do you know what induced them to go North? The chance of getting work.

1127. By Mr. Nielson: At that time was your office aware that at Ingham alone there were 300 unemployed kanakas? I was not aware of it. There was no such intelligence available in the office. I was not aware of it in the slightest. That information did not reach me until some days afterwards. An islander cannot go North unless he gets a permit. When some of them told me that they wanted to go North I told them that they might not be able to get work, and they said, "Never mind, me go."

1128. By Mr. Paget: These islanders were not engaged here? Some agreements were cancelled, and ninety of the "boys" were engaged for the North. The remainder went North on their own account. It was prior to their going North that this intelligence came down that the conditions that operated here were operating in the North, and the chances of getting work there were remote. They were told that such were the conditions, and they had better not go, but they elected to go. When an inspector tells these men these things, and they say they will go just the same, what power has an inspector got to stop them? I have no more power to stop a kanaka from going where he pleases than I have the power to stop the chairman of this Commission.

1129. By Mr. Paget: He is a free agent? He is practically a free agent.

1130. By Mr. Nielson: Do you think that they were influenced by outsiders to go North? I do not know. I know that one man in my presence told them that they would not get work there.

1131. Have you heard that some of the men paid a fee for advice that they would get work if they went North? No, I have not heard such a thing. This is the first I have heard of it.

1132. The intelligence between the various branches of the Polynesian Department would have to filter through the head office? We often get our news through the Press, but of course the head office would advise us in a case like that.

1133. Such intelligence would be forwarded to you pretty promptly? Yes. The way that intelligence reached me was in this way: There was some trouble up North, and Mr. V. R. Brand, the local agent for many Northern planters, was here. I said, "Are you going to engage some of these 'boys'?" and he said, "I have just had a wire to cancel all the others." I saw at once what the position was.

1134. Your scheme with regard to the "boys" after the 31st of December will include the reshipping of them within a reasonable time? Yes.

1135. And to provide for them in the meantime? Yes.

1136. And distribute them amongst their various homes? I do not say that my scheme goes so far as that. It would go to meet the local difficulty we are in.

1137. As something to avoid the necessity of the "boys" returning? No.

1138. You will have to provide for the return of the "boys" or something in lieu of it? Yes.

1139. If you do not provide for the return of each "boy" to his own "passage," you must find something in lieu of it? The men must be absolutely returned to their own "passages."

1140. Suppose the men do not wish to go there? The men will have to go to their own "passages" first, and, if they will not land, you will have to bring them back. Your scheme for the New Hebrides might get over the difficulty. I say that no man should be forced to land at his own "passage" if he does not wish to do so. I do not say that you should be compelled to keep that man in Queensland; but, if he does not wish to land, you are bound to bring him back and let him state his case before those in authority, and it would be for them to say whether he should form part of a colony somewhere else.

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1141. According to the Act and regulations we are bound to bring that "boy" back to his own "passage," and nowhere else, even if he elects to go somewhere else.—In that case, are you prepared to suggest that in the case of a "boy" who does not want to land at his own "passage" he should be allowed to go somewhere else? I would most certainly give him that option.

1142. *By Mr. Paget:* You said you would first of all give the "boys" the opportunity of landing from the vessel at the "passages" from which they were taken; that is the law as it stands at present, but if any "boy" should refuse to land you would bring him back to Queensland and let him state his case to the authorities? Yes, and let him elect to go somewhere else.

1143. *By Mr. Nielson:* But could he not tell the authorities all this before he takes the trip down to the islands? No, he could not do it. A man may have been away from his "passage" for fifteen years, and when he is taken back there he finds the conditions altogether altered.

1144. He wants to see if his party is still in power? He really wants to see whether his life will be safe, and if it will be safe to land.

1145. Have you any other information? I have a table giving the number of kanakas and whites employed in this district during the last nineteen years, and also a table giving the ruling rate of wages during the last nineteen years.

[Table giving the total number of whites and coloured men who passed through the Labour Bureau at Bundaberg in the preceding nineteen years tendered, and marked *Appendix I*.]

[Table giving the wages of the white workers on an average of eighteen years' records, tendered and marked *Appendix II*.]

1146. *By Mr. Paget:* Does your table show those who received rations? Yes, it shows where a man gets rations.

1147. *By the Chairman:* Have you anything else in tabular form which will be of service to us? It might be of interest to show the various times taken by ships when returning islanders to their homes.

[Table showing the times taken by vessels in returning islanders to their homes, tendered and marked *Appendix III*.]

1148. *By the Chairman:* Have you any other information of that kind? I shall have some more matter to give you later on.

1149. *By Mr. Nielson:* With regard to the returning of islanders, you do not think it would be advisable to depart from the present methods? I do not think it would be advisable.

1150. Do you think it would be advisable to let a contract for the return of islanders? I would not object to that if they were in a position to carry out their obligations.

1151. *By the Chairman:* That is if they send them away under the surveillance of Government officials? Yes; under the same conditions as at present, because it is too late to change it.

1152. *By Mr. Nielson:* Seeing that it is the employer who is liable for the return of the kanakas and not the Government, can you suggest a scheme whereby tenders could be called amongst the various employers? I would rather not do that. I would rather confine my evidence to something on which I can give the Commission some assistance.

1153. *By Mr. Paget:* Are a large number of the islanders to be returned re-engagement islanders? Practically all. Taking this district you will see that the average of the number of indentured islanders during the last nineteen years in this district runs to about 1,300 or 1,500, and we have 300 islanders now.

1154. For all practical purposes it is the duty of the department to arrange for the return passages of re-engagement islanders, the department having received £5 passage money for each kanaka? It practically falls on the department, but the extra cost falls on the last employer.

1155. That is the extra cost above £5? Yes.

1156. But the department is practically responsible? It practically amounts to that, but for the three-year "boys" we expect the employer to pay.

1157. You have already stated that you would think it advisable to continue the present method of returning islanders by schooner? Yes.

1158. But in the event of its becoming necessary to return the islanders by steamer, they would necessarily be returned in large numbers, say 500 in each vessel? Yes, 500 at least.

1159. If large shipments of returned islanders were made in one body—say, 500 in each steamer—would there be any danger of the islanders conspiring to seize the ship and get rid of the crew? I do not think so.

1160. You do not think it necessary for a strong guard to be sent with the ship? I do not think so.

1161. Do you think it would be necessary for extra boats' crews to be sent for more covering boats? I would have a *pro rata* equipment. Also, in connection with Government agents, I would have two Government agents. There should be one senior agent to act as Government agent and the other to help in the landing.

1162. Then one would always remain on board? The senior man would take charge, and they would both assist in the landing.

1163. Do you think it would be necessary to have extra equipment and extra covering boats furnished in case of any difficulty in landing? Our ordinary ships take 140 men each, and the steamers might take 500. You ought to take a *pro rata* equipment if you take more men in each vessel.

1164. *By the Chairman:* You are in charge of the Labour Bureau here? Yes.

1165. How many labourers passed through your hands? On an average about 395 per year for the last nineteen years. Those men have got employment through my bureau.

1166. Is it amongst the farmers and planters that you have placed your labour? Yes. My maximum number has been 900 in one year.

1167. Are you able to say whether the class of labour that you have supplied has given satisfaction? On the whole it has given satisfaction, but I would like to see the bureau doing a great deal better work than it has been doing for the last three or four years, during which period there has been a material falling off. First of all the drought was instrumental in restricting our operations, and it takes time to re-establish the old conditions. I take a great interest in the bureau, and always have. When I started on 1st February, 1888, I was practically the first officer to start it in the outside districts.

1168. *By Mr. Paget:* Can you make a suggestion as to how the operations of the bureau can be extended? I see that the Government entertain the idea of establishing a proper bureau, and that is a very good

- H. St. G. Caulfield. idea. I think that a system of credentials should be made compulsory as a part of the system. Every man coming to the bureau for work should be required to present a certificate setting forth what he has been doing. That would make the bureau a real live one.
- 4 April, 1906. 1169. *By the Chairman*: But suppose a man came to you who had no such certificate? I should do my best for him; but, at the same time, he would be given to understand that he would take second rank.
1170. From what source would he get his certificate? From his employer, to show some credentials of service.
1171. Then, when you were placing a man on your register, you would furnish him with a form? Yes. I had a form which came before me the other day from the Shops and Factories Department. It was issued by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, and is a part of the system they have in operation in Fiji. It showed the date when a man entered their service, in what capacity he entered, his promotions, his conduct during the term of his service, when he left, and his reason, and the paper is signed. I thought it a capital system.
1172. Are you aware that such a form is in existence in connection with the pastoral industry? I am not aware of that; but I do not see why it should not be in existence in connection with the sugar industry. We want to supply the sugar industry with real good labour.
1173. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think that the sugar planters could inaugurate their own system? It would be preferable that they should do so; but when they find that it is part and parcel of the bureau system I think they would fall into line. I do not think they would oppose the idea. It is in the interests of both employers and employees that the system should come into operation. If an employer is going to cavil at it, he deserves no assistance. But I find there is a great deal of lukewarmness in quarters where you would expect assistance.
1174. *By the Chairman*: Could you furnish us with a copy of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's certificate? Yes.
1175. Does any labour gravitate from this district to the Downs into the wheat country? Yes, we have experienced that to our disadvantage.
1176. At what season did it leave you? The wheat season generally comes in in October and November. Generally in good seasons we have a keen demand. My demand is getting very keen about October and November in a good season. I remember one season when that operated against us. I had to keep wiring to Brisbane for labour, and could not get it.
1177. Is there any communication between your bureau and the bureaux, say, at Warwick or Toowoomba? I have power to communicate with any Labour Bureau I desire.
1178. If you were short of labour here, and had reason to believe you could obtain it from Toowoomba, you could wire for it? In a case of urgency I would, but, for preference, I would wire to the officer in charge of the Labour Bureau.
1179. *By Mr. Nielson*: Does the bureau receive a fee from the employer? No; it is absolutely free, and that is what I would advocate. We want to encourage them and not block them in any way.
1180. *By the Chairman*: If a farmer sends to you for half a dozen cane-cutters, do you send him the first half dozen men on the list? If he asks me to do my best for him, I satisfy myself by inquiry before sending the men. I sometimes got applications for twenty-five men in a bunch last season.
1181. We were told yesterday that the first men on the list were sent? That is not the case. It is not doing justice to the bureau at all. If a man writes to me and constitutes me his agent, quite apart from my official capacity, I try to satisfy him.
1182. Would you deem it your duty to try to satisfy him whether he practically constituted you his agent or not? The men would have to satisfy me that they were competent to do the work required; but at present we have no system of check. We must take a man's word as to his qualifications. But, if every man were required to be furnished with credentials, I would know whether he was competent.
1183. With a system of credentials, you would give the preference to the man who produced a document in support of his statements with regard to his qualifications? I should consider myself bound to do so.
1184. The labourers would then see it was to their advantage to possess such credentials? Yes; it would be to the advantage of the Government, too, to supply the sugar industry with a proper class of labour.
1185. Do you issue many railway passes to labourers? Only in sending men to assured work. Our operations have been a little restricted lately in that respect. We have had instructions to be very careful.
1186. By what means do you assure yourself that their statements as to getting work are true? If a man brought me a letter purporting to come from Longreach, and I was not satisfied, I would wire to the officer in charge of the bureau at Longreach making inquiries.
1187. Do men going on trips like that ever apply to you for relief in the shape of food? No.
1188. Might not men want food on such a long trip? I have never been asked for it.
1189. *By Mr. Paget*: But could you grant it if you were asked for it? I have power to grant it under any circumstances, but I must use my discretion. I have never been questioned yet. If I thought a man looked as if he needed assistance, if I could not give it to him in my official capacity, I would give it to him privately. No man has ever been denied. I am happy to say I have always had confidence placed in me, and I have never abused it.
1190. *By the Chairman*: Can you offer any suggestions as to improving the present method of working the bureau? The only radical improvement I can suggest is what I have already suggested. If it is adopted I think it will be found we have a real live bureau.
1191. Are there any private registry offices here? There are one or two, but they charge fees.
1192. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you received any complaints about the bureau interfering with the operations of private registry offices? I cannot say I have received complaints. Where a private office has engaged a lot of men, and the agent has applied for a pass, and I have declined to give it, there may have been some discontent; but there has been no complaint that we have clashed with their operations, because we started long before there was any private office in Bundaberg. Of course in Brisbane there were private offices for years before the bureau started.
1193. *By the Chairman*: Do not people who make engagements through private registry offices make arrangements for the payment of the passage money? Yes.
1194. So that you are only protecting the revenue in refusing to give them passes? Yes; and that is why I refuse.
1195. Is there any surplus labour about Bundaberg? There is a great deal.

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1196. Where are those men? Camped all round the outskirts of the town.

1197. Can you estimate the number? I suppose there must be 400 or 500 men waiting for the season.

1198. How long will they have to wait? I do not suppose we shall start operations until about the beginning of July, at the earliest.

1199. You have no knowledge of the labour required in other parts of the State? No.

1200. So far as you know, is this a reliable class of labour, on the average? Yes. Of course there are all sorts; but, taking them all round, they are keen for work.

1201. *By Mr. Paget*: How have they arrived here?—Have any number of them received railway passes from Brisbane, or have they walked? Latterly they have not received passes, but previously they came up on passes.

1202. During the present year? Yes.

1203. *By Mr. Nielson*: Does the number of men you speak of include local residents out of work? Yes; men who have been accustomed to work season after season in the sugar industry.

1204. *By the Chairman*: I was referring to surplus labour from elsewhere? I should put down the number at 200 or 300.

1205. *By Mr. Nielson*: You say passes have not been issued recently? We have been a little more exacting.

1206. If a bureau such as you mention is established, could you not do away with free railway passes altogether? We are not supposed to issue free passes. We always hope to recover, and we try to recover.

1207. But could you not let the employer who engages a man pay his fare? He would be expected to assist the department in the recovery of the fare.

1208. But why should he not pay it in the first instance? Well, he does not know the class of men he is getting; but under the new conditions he would have more security, and you might get him to do it.

1209. He risks his £25 for a kanaka without knowing what sort of "boy" he is going to get; and why should the Government pay the fare of a white man for him? I think the employer would be more prepared to pay under the new conditions, because he would have more security as to the reliability of the man he would get.

1210. *By the Chairman*: The man would have a favourable certificate? I am arguing on that basis.

1211. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would you recommend that the men going to a job should get some special rebate in their fare—say, that they should pay half-fare? That would be very reasonable. In fact, I would be prepared in every legitimate way to encourage the operations of the Labour Bureau. Of course it would be contingent on the man's giving satisfaction and remaining a certain period to entitle him to the rebate.

1212. I do not mean that altogether. You know that in Brisbane they issue special workmen's tickets on the suburban lines. If a man came from Maryborough or Brisbane, would you be prepared to recommend that he should get a special workman's fare? Certainly.

1213. Have you any idea of the number of men who will be required in the coming season in this district? According to the tabulated statement I gave you (*vide* Appendix I.), the average number of men employed in the district for the last nineteen years has been 2,690. That includes an average of about 2,300 kanakas. In place of those kanakas you have 700 or 800 kanakas now, so that you have to make up a shortage of from 1,400 to 1,600, in addition to the 385 white men whom I have allowed for. That is for this season, and next season the position will be even more accentuated.

1214. *By the Chairman*: You have only some 700 kanakas available to meet a total requirement of 2,690? Yes.

1215. *By Mr. Nielson*: If you look at your table you will find that in the earlier years the numbers were very much greater, owing, no doubt, to the fact that a lot of land has gone out of cultivation—Take the average for the last six years? Our highest year was in 1893, when we had a total of 3,422, made up of 2,772 kanakas and 650 whites. Of course the last four years have been a period of drought. Still the number rose from 2,681 in 1900 to 2,845 in 1901. Then in 1902 it fell to 1,715; in 1903, it was 2075; in 1904, it was 2,013, and last year it was only 1,488.

1216. During the drought years there was a number of kanakas whose agreements could not be broken? Yes.

1217. Take last year—Your figures are 1,327 kanakas and 139 white men, so that the Labour Bureau did practically nothing?

1218. *By the Chairman*: Now they have 700 Pacific Islanders, and there are 500 men out of work—What number will you require in addition to the 500 when they have to employ white labour? You will certainly want a minimum of 1,500—the same as last year? Yes.

1219. *By Mr. Nielson*: Then you have to take into consideration the numbers now at work; they will still be here? Quite so; but you have also to take into consideration that only about one-third of the men apply to me. Two-thirds have to be engaged by the employer direct. I think I am understating it when I put it at two-thirds; so that there is another big number to be arranged for.

1220. The figures you are now giving us are the best argument that could be given for the establishment of a proper bureau, because neither you nor any witness so far has been able to give us any idea of what labour will be wanted during the coming season? I am not confining myself to the coming season at all. I am having regard to five or ten years ahead, and it is a fair basis to take the figures for the last nineteen years to work upon.

1221. You told us how many kanakas there are because you have a record of them? Yes.

1222. Now, would you undertake to tell us about how many white men there are engaged on the sugar plantations to-day? I can go very close to it.

1223. I would like to know? I do not think you would be very far out if you put it down at 700.

1224. *By Mr. Paget*: At the present moment? Yes.

1225. Yesterday one of the witnesses stated that the extra area registered for white labour during this current year would produce 100,000 tons of cane over and above what was produced last year, and another witness said that the general consensus of opinion was that a man would average from 2 to 3 tons of cane per day? Yes; 2½ tons per day.

1226. If that man's statement is correct, and you allow 100 days for a crushing season, then there will be 500 more men wanted in this district in the coming season? The regular crushing season lasts five months.

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1227. Yes, that is equal to 100 working days, which would make 500 extra men necessary. I ask you whether you can give us any idea where these men are to come from for the present year, because your present unemployed would be absorbed in an ordinary season according to your present figures? I think you can take it that the requirements for this season will be met.

1228. From what source? From the labour that will gravitate here from other parts of Queensland and New South Wales, and from the Darling Downs.

1229. That is the ordinary floating labour? I think we shall get all our labour this year.

1230. You will want from 500 to 700 men extra if there is an increase of 100,000 tons? We shall get them. There is another interesting point. I used to get statistics from the employers as to how many of the men they employed had been with them in the previous crushing seasons, and I worked it out, and I found that they got 52 per cent. back again for the following season.

1231. Does that include the mill hands? Yes.

1232. *By the Chairman:* Are you advised of the rates of wages ruling in other parts of the colony? I can get it. That work is connected with the Labour Bureau, which has had every attention from us—far more than we can afford to give it.

1233. Do you issue relief? Yes.

1234. Do you issue much? I do in the cases of families that are destitute, but there is not much relief issued now. If a man is sickly or destitute he gets relief.

1235. You have not had much application for it? No.

1236. You think you are safe for labour this year? Yes.

1237. You do not think you will be safe next year? I think we shall have to do something next year. There may be a change this year, but I think we are safe.

1238. The surplus labour next year will probably come in after the kanakas are withdrawn, after the 31st of December? Yes.

1239. *By Mr. Paget:* Then there will be an extra number wanted for the crushing season of 1907? That will have to be provided for. Something will have to be done then. I am also of opinion that wages are really an important factor in deciding this matter. If a fair rate of wages is given it will be all right. I am voicing the opinion of men who have spoken to me.

1240. *By the Chairman:* You have given us this table of wages based upon figures which you have, and you can absolutely rely on it? Yes, those figures are absolutely reliable. There is nothing submitted to your Commission by myself which is not reliable.

1241. Is there any question as to how many hours a day they should work? I have never heard them raise that point. I have heard them complain about the food, but not about the hours of labour.

1242. Have you had anything to do with men as to rates of wages in this district? Yes.

1243. Have you heard the cane-cutters complain about getting 25s. a week and found? No, I never heard men complain of that.

1244. We were told that men should get 30s. a week and found? Well, good men should be worth that. The chippers have complained to me about the wages they get.

1245. What wages do the chippers get? They used to get 17s. and 18s. a week and found, but now they get 20s.

1246. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do they complain of 20s.? No, I have never heard them complain of 20s., although they used to complain of 18s.

1247. *By Mr. Paget:* Mr. Young says he gives them 20s.? I do not know anything about that.

1248. *By the Chairman:* A man to chip cane requires great muscular strength? Quite so.

1249. You say they are satisfied with 20s.? I have heard no complaints about 20s.

1250. They have not to find their own tools? Oh, no.

1251. What is done in the wet days with these men—are they paid just the same for wet and dry days? No; wet days are deducted.

1252. We were told this morning that unless a man worked for two and three-quarter hours he did not get anything at all for that day if he stopped work owing to heavy rain coming on; do you know if that is so? This is the first I have heard of it. I know that wet days are not paid for.

1253. What do you think about it if a man is turned out to work, and the work has to be stopped owing to the rain? If you ask my opinion, I should say that a man should be paid. If he has to be turned out again because it comes on to rain that is a gift to the plantation, and the men should be paid. I may be thought too philanthropic, but I should feel inclined that way myself if I got the rain. There is another idea I have in connection with this matter. It is only an idea, but it might find root with some employer if I ventilate it. If a man works for a month in the service of a planter, and a wet day comes along, there should not be a hard-and-fast line drawn for all men to be unpaid for that day. I would suggest that a man working for a month should be entitled to one wet day, if he works two months he should be entitled to two wet days, and if three months three wet days.

1254. *By Mr. Paget:* Are there not a number of employers who make work for their employees on those days so as to meet them? I have heard so.

1255. We were told this morning that there is a place in this district where the men are not paid, and they have to pay for their own rations if they have to knock off through getting wet? I heard that voiced here to this Commission, and I have seen it in the Press. When I first saw it I took action to find out if it were so, and I was told it was a fact.

1256. *By the Chairman:* Is it a general practice? I do not think so, and I hope not.

1257. *By Mr. Paget:* You have not heard of it being a general practice? I have not heard of it as a general practice or I would say so.

1258. *By the Chairman:* Can you suggest anything that can be done to encourage men to come to this district; can you suggest some inducement that might be held out to them? The main inducement lies in the wages. Give them a good rate of wage, and they will come. They will find something to put in their time at in the slack season, and good men and real handy men will be kept on.

1259. *By Mr. Paget:* From the nature of the crop there must be some slack time? Yes; it is like the hop industry in England, where they get the Irish labourers to come over every season. It is one of those industries which only provides work for a portion of the time. If there was only a standard rate of wage—and it will be arrived at—I think you would get a class of labour here that will be able to do something in the slack season.

1260. *By the Chairman*: You spoke just now about the standard being fixed; does the price you speak of as having been fixed as the standard commend itself to your idea? I do not think the standard that has been fixed is liberal enough.
1261. Is there any reason why there should not be a fixed scale for the various operations in the field just the same as the rouseabouts and shearers get? I think it would be better in the interests of all if some such system were adopted, as you would get finality then.
1262. Is there any reason why it should not be so? I do not think so, as a man is worth it.
1263. *By Mr. Paget*: Is the standard mentioned in the *Star* yesterday the standard you refer to? Yes.
1264. *By Mr. Nielson*: You do not think men will be induced to come here on that standard? You will get men to come for the wages mentioned in that standard.
1265. *By the Chairman*: Because they must come? Yes. We want men to come here and stay, and give us their services year in and year out as good men.
1266. Is there a movement on foot to formulate such a scheme? Yes, I have heard so.
1267. You think that the sooner such a scale is formulated the better? I think so.
1268. You are also an immigration agent here? Yes.
1269. What immigration has there been of late years? None, except nominated passengers.
1270. Have you barracks here and accommodation? Yes.
1271. Are they commodious barracks? Yes, they are used now by the unemployed seeking work.
1272. What number can you accommodate? Fifty men fairly comfortably. Now that I have got the opportunity, I would ask your Commission to allow me to say something about it. Once or twice I have had the operations of the Labour Bureau impeded by the fact that the dépôt has been closed, and I found that it operated against my work very seriously, and on each occasion I have moved to try to get the dépôt opened again.
1273. In what way did it operate against your work? I would like to have the men at my hand when I want them. Men often want labour in a hurry, and I have not got time to go down the town looking for them.
1274. Do you feed the men who live there? No; it is just a shelter for them.
1275. Why was it closed? I cannot go into that.
1276. Have you any men there now? Yes. When Sir Horace Tozer came up here he allowed men to go into it on the 1st of July every year.
1277. You have got it open now owing to a special application which you made? Yes. It was shut, and I made special application, and it was allowed to be opened again. But in future the Labour Bureau operations should not be interfered with.
1278. *By Mr. Nielson*: You say that wherever there is a bureau there should be a dépôt somewhere handy? Yes; it would be useful.
1279. *By the Chairman*: To house men waiting for work? Yes, because some employers often want six or seven men in a hurry, and I cannot go and scour the town for them.
1280. *By Mr. Paget*: Can we presume that when the dépôt is occupied by the unemployed they keep it clean? Yes.
1281. Then it is not an expense to the department? No. We always look after the cleaning. It is not an expense, and the men who are in there give every satisfaction.
1282. Then the dépôts are not closed on the score of expense? No.

Hon. ARTHUR GIBSON, M.L.C., Sugar Planter and Manufacturer, examined:

1283. *By the Chairman*: Where is your plantation? At Bingera.
1284. How many acres have you under cultivation at Bingera? About 3,500 acres.
1285. *By Mr. Paget*: Is that the area under cultivation at Bingera only? At Bingera and the adjoining estate connected by rail there are 3,200 acres under cultivation.
1286. *By the Chairman*: What acreage did you cut last year? About 1,700 acres.
1287. And what was the tonnage of cane from that? I cannot give that, as I did not come provided with that information.
1288. What class of labour do you employ? White and coloured.
1289. You are talking about field labour? Yes.
1290. You take white labour when you cannot get other colours? No; we feel it our duty to employ as many white men as we possibly can.
1291. *By Mr. Paget*: What is the proportion of white labour to coloured employed by you? About one white man for every two black men.
1292. *By the Chairman*: What wages do you pay the white men? From 12s. to 25s. a week.
1293. Is that all the year round, or only in the cutting season? The wages men are either old men or lads. The other men are paid according to the work they do.
1294. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you supply these men with rations? In most cases. The figure I quoted includes rations.
1295. *By Mr. Nielson*: You give your men the option of taking 8s. a week or rations? Yes; 8s. a week or taking his rations.
1296. *By the Chairman*: And 8s. a week is what you consider it costs to keep a man? No; it costs 10s., but we would sooner keep the men there and allow them rations.
1297. What proportion are married men at your place? A bout one in three are married men. The married men are treated differently.
1298. *By Mr. Paget*: Are the married men provided with cottages for their own use? Yes.
1299. Rent free? Yes; rent free, and wood and water free.
1300. *By the Chairman*: What wage do they get? 20s., or rather 28s., and wood and water free, and house rent free.
1301. Do you find that they stay at that wage? Some of them have been there for twenty years. Married men do not shift, and some of them keep a cow.
1302. Do you cut cane by contract? Yes.
1303. What are you in the habit of giving for cane cut by contract? The wage the men get for cutting and putting it on the tram is from 2s. 6d. per ton to 4s. 6d.

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1304. *By Mr. Paget*: How much? Some get 2s. 6d., others 2s. 9d., 3s., 3s. 3d., 4s., and 4s. 6d., according to the class of cane they cut.
1305. What cane would the 4s. cane be, for instance? It would be an old ratoon with the trash on it.
1306. And the 2s. 6d.? That would be a first crop of from 20 tons to 25 tons to the acre.
1307. *By the Chairman*: Have you any idea what wages these contractors have made themselves at that price? The contractors pay their men 6s. a day, not found, and bring their own tent, and I am aware that the contractor makes 12s. per day himself.
1308. *By Mr. Paget*: Does the contractor work with the men? Yes.
1309. That is his wage? Yes, his own work is in that.
1310. *By the Chairman*: Can you readily let contracts at those figures? Yes, at 3s. 6d.
1311. *By Mr. Paget*: Are we to understand, when you say at 3s. 6d., that you mean for the crops running from 20 tons to 25 tons to the acre? It is for crops that run from 12 tons to 30 tons to the acre. A man will come and look at the plantation, and he will see that some of the cane is stunted, but he will take it as a whole. If I pick out one piece they will ask 3s. 9d. for it, and 3s. 6d. for another piece, but they take it by the block.
1312. And how much taking it by the block? They will see that one bit is fair and another bit indifferent, and they will say 3s. 6d. for the block.
1313. *By Mr. Nielson*: At what average? At an average of 15 to 16 tons to the acre.
1314. *By the Chairman*: How many kanakas have you got? Seventy-four.
1315. And how many of the other coloured aliens that you spoke of? Forty-eight Indians, whose time is about to expire, and they will go in a week.
1316. You are glad to be rid of them? No; but under present conditions I will let them go.
1317. Are you registered for the bonus? I have 2,500 acres registered.
1318. How many yellow men have you got? Does that mean Chinese? One.
- 1318A. A cook? He is a gardener, unfortunately.
1319. Do you expect to be short of labour to take off this year's crop? I do not know how I shall get on.
1320. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you thought out any scheme by which you can supply yourself with labour during the current year? Yes; I am working out a scheme; but the best-invented schemes "gang aft agley."
1321. Have the sugar-growers in the district, as a body or as several bodies, made any attempt to induce a sufficiency of white labour to supply what is evidently going to be a deficiency in the labour market during the present year? I do not know of any planter or manufacturer who has gone outside this State to obtain a supply of labour to meet the changes which are to take place during the next six or seven months.
1322. Are they trying to make arrangements inside the State? Yes. I know a large number of my lessers have now made their arrangements to get labour amongst farmers' sons, and the workmen that we employ during the off season are preparing to make big wages when the cutting and crushing comes forward.
1323. *By Mr. Paget*: Were the 2,500 acres of cane which you have registered grown by white labour? Nearly everything was done by black labour.
1324. Then it is practically out of hand? Yes. Two-thirds of it was worked by black labour.
1325. It requires only to be harvested by white labour? That is so.
1326. I presume the scheme you spoke of has reference to those 2,500 acres? Yes. I am leasing that land as quickly as ever I can, and I am paying the gentlemen who are leasing it to harvest the cane.
1327. *By the Chairman*: Then the future cultivation of these lands will fall on them? Yes.
1328. *By Mr. Paget*: Your firm has no present intention of taking the harvesting of such a large area on its own shoulders, and you are endeavouring to subdivide it into small farms? We shall cut 1,000 to 1,500 acres ourselves, no doubt.
1329. Are you trying to make any arrangements to get labour for that area? Men come and ask questions, and we talk with them, and they are waiting to see if they can do better elsewhere. That is the condition of things just now. If we fail in the Northern market and in our own State, we shall have to go further afield, and try to bring men from New South Wales and Victoria.
1330. *By the Chairman*: What inducement can be held out to men from the other States to come here—simply wages, I suppose? I get letters nearly every day from workmen in the other States, asking if I can find them employment. We give no encouragement to them at the present moment, until we know whether we are going to fail here. We have the men in our factory, and we have some in the field, who have come to us for twenty years, and they are now writing, "I wish you could give a mate of mine a chance," and we reply, "Yes." Two-thirds of the men who come to us return to their ordinary vocations after the season.
1331. In that case, there is very little fear of your being short of labour? It is only of the harvesting that we are afraid. That work is new to our white men.
1332. One would suppose that where a firm is so popular as that they are nearly sure to attract labour to themselves? I do not fear a great deal. I simply say I do not know what the future is to bring.
1333. *By Mr. Paget*: You cannot feel too certain? I am not certain.
1334. May I ask what price you paid for cane delivered at your mill last year? It cost us 15s. or 16s. at the mill.
1335. Does a farmer 25 miles from your mill receive the same price on the field as the man 5 miles away, or does the farmer bear the cost of carriage? No. I pay as much as 2s. 7d. a ton for bringing cane from the field to the mill. I go 25 miles to Watawa, and lay down some 4 or 5 miles of 3-feet 6-inch tramway. I get Government trucks, put up derricks, erect winches, make sidings and crossings to enable a man to get as near the railway as possible. Probably there are twenty-four derricks with sidings in some 5 miles. I contour the country to get the farmers in so that they can load their cane at a reasonable rate. At Watawa they can cut and load the cane into the Government trucks for 3s. 3d. a ton. They do that in the field 30 miles away from the factory.
1336. What would those men receive? 11s. a ton there.
1337. Have you any farmers who are nearer to the mill than those at Watawa? Yes; we have the Kolan farmers. They get 12s. a ton on the field. Portable trams are put in everywhere through their fields, and they load on to the trucks. They are permanent 2-feet 6-inch trams.

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1333. Have you tried the experiment in the past of subdividing your estates and purchasing cane from the lessees? Yes; we have done that for the last eleven years. We have had thirty to thirty-five farmers on the Watawa Estate. The firm work about half the estate, and the lessees the other half. We started the scheme in 1895. They have gone through their first agreement of ten years, and they are running through their second of seven years. The firm have now let everything on Watawa with the exception of 50 acres of cane. That is, we have leased 1,300 acres to white men, who are supplying our mill with cane.

1339. Those farmers came principally from the Laidley district, did they not? Yes. A number of them have families who are now grown up, and the holdings have become rather small. Their sons and daughters have married and settled down, and, as a community, they are fairly well off.

1340. Have those sons and daughters taken up farms? Yes; and some of the sons have taken up the daughters.

1341. At present you have from thirty to thirty-five farmers on your leased lands at Watawa? I buy cane from ninety farmers. The firm buys the whole of the cane from Watawa on the railway line to Sharon—some 25 miles—and that cane is almost entirely grown by white labour.

1342. Have those farmers the right to purchase the lands that they are now leasing?—Are they leased to them under a purchasing agreement? No; but they are told that the leases will never be taken from them, and a scheme is being worked out by the firm at present to sell those lands. The men believe that they will be their own, and the intention of the firm is that they shall be so; but the legislative difficulties of the last five years have barred master and man from doing anything.

1343. Are there any Asiatics or Pacific Islanders amongst the ninety farmers who supply your mill with cane? I think there are three or four Chinese who are leaseholders, but not to us. We have none.

1344. Have you any Pacific Islanders who are leaseholders? No.

1345. Is it your firm's intention to continue cultivation after 1st January next, when it will be illegal to employ Pacific Islanders? The firm to which I belong never says "die." For forty years we have met with one obstacle after another in the sugar industry, and every time, as you know, we thought it was going to be worse, and it has gradually got worse, and worse, and worse. The country thinks it is getting better, and better, and better. We shall fight it out until the finish, whatever may come of it. Eleven years ago we started what we believed was what would come later on. We started another place called "The Cedars," and put twenty-five families on to that. After five years there was not one of them there; but there was a debt on our books of about £5,000, and we had to take and work the place ourselves. We now have about 300 acres at "The Cedars," leased to white men again. We are opening up a bit of our country on the Burnett River, building houses on it, and we have agreed to feed the men and keep them going, so that they can live until cancelling time comes. They will cut the cane. We will help them to fight their battle, and, if they have pluck, they will make money; if they have no backbone, they will go down, and so shall we. We intend that the whole 1,000 acres shall be leased out to white men, and men are coming round asking about the land.

1346. If your firm is unable to subdivide that property and to find suitable tenants, do you intend to carry on the cultivation of those 1,500 acres after the end of the year, and, if so, do you intend to cultivate it with white labour? That is the intention.

1347. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you trash your cane at Bingera? Just about this time of the year, when the men are not very busy, we generally give it one trashing. I think nearly the whole of our cane has been trashed once.

1348. You had some blocks registered last year? Yes.

1349. They were worked with white men? Yes.

1350. Did they turn out satisfactory? They did very well.

1351. Have those blocks been trashed by white labour this year? Yes; the first trashing is an easy one. The cane is only five or six months old.

1352. On the whole, then, so far as you have had experience of white labour, you are not dissatisfied? On the whole, I am not dissatisfied with the work done by white men.

1353. Do you think the bonus has any bearing on the continuance of the industry? The bonus is everything to the cultivation of the cane. I ought to say, as a manufacturer, that it also has a mighty bearing to the injury of the manufacturer, and that is the next point that is going to arise. It will kill the manufacturer.

1354. *By Mr. Paget:* In what way? Next year the duty will be £6 a ton, the excise £4, and the bonus £3. The Government will take £1. You have taken £4 from the manufacturer's protection, and you leave him £2 to fight the world, and the cost of the Commonwealth in licenses and in guarantees and in the extra cost of working will not leave the manufacturer more than £1 10s. to fight the world. You will get from Hamburg sugar for a freight of 12s or 13s a ton to Sydney, whilst the freight from Bundaberg to Sydney is 16s. per ton—or 4s. a ton more than it takes to bring sugar from Hamburg. You have all the heavy Customs and harbour dues that are now imposed, and you have to compete with a sugar that has a protection of £8 per ton given to it by the German Government.

1355. Yes; but has not beet sugar entering the Commonwealth to pay a Customs duty of £10 per ton? Yes; and the manufacturer then has a £6 advantage over the Australian manufacturer.

1356. *By Mr. Nielson:* You do not consider the bonus given on the cane any use to the manufacturer who grows his own cane? No. You have to go into the markets of the world to sell your sugar. The German Government give a bounty of £8 a ton on beet sugar. It is sent into this country on payment of a duty of £6, and that leaves me £2, so the German manufacturer is in exactly the same position as we are. Witnesses to-day say that men should get 6s. a day for field labour and also in the mill; whilst the German manufacturer gets the same work done for 1s. 3d. That being so, how can we fight him? The whole thing will go to the dogs when it comes to paying that price for labour. I have a son in charge of a plantation in Brazil, and he writes that they give 6s. 9d. a ton for cane there.

1357. *By Mr. Paget:* How many tons of cane does it take in Brazil to make a ton of sugar? About 12 tons; but he reckons that the cane there is as good as ours, if the manufacturing was equal. What we are fighting is people in other countries, and that is my greatest difficulty. I know that we can grow cane, but if we grow more cane than will suffice for the Australian consumption of sugar, what are we going to do with the surplus? That puzzles me more than anything else at the present moment.

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1355. That is a question for the canegrowers and manufacturers to consider among themselves in connection with the formation of a "combine" to export the surplus product at a loss? We have had "combines" to export a surplus before, but there is such a small margin. Before we had a big margin.

1359. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think the fiscal arrangements should be altered? I think they should be the same as in America. In Hawaii they let them work with Japanese or Chinese, and every alien in the world, and give them protection; yet in this fine Australia we hesitate to give an industry that is worth £2,000,000 of money per annum a protection of £6.

1360. Do you think £8 a ton would do it? £8 a ton would save it.

1361. *By Mr. Paget*: Of course that is not the question at the present moment? Yes; but, if this Commission is going to approach the Federal Government, they ought to know certain facts. They may build up the grower and kill the manufacturer, and that is where the trouble comes in.

1362. Well, we are appointed by the State Government.—At the present time the Customs duty on sugar in the Commonwealth is £6 per ton, and the excise duty, which is paid by the manufacturer, is £3 per ton; of that £3 per ton £2 is returned to the white labour canegrower in the shape of bounty? That is to-day.

1363. Yes.—The bounty varies, according to the district and the sugar contents, from 4s. in the South to 5s. in the North of Queensland.—Now, there has been some recent legislation in the Commonwealth Parliament with reference to this excise and bounty.—You have already stated that next year and for a certain number of years the excise will be £4 per ton, and you stated that that was a distinct blow at the manufacturer.—He will be practically paying £4 a ton out of the value of his product as against £3 a ton.—That is so, is it not? Yes.

1364. The canegrower is to receive a bounty not of £2 but of £3 per ton? Yes.

1365. Can you tell the Commission whether the increased bounty will enable a canegrower to pay increased wages to the white men in the industry as against the wages they pay this year, taking into consideration the increase of excise from £3 per ton to £4 per ton? One should have no hesitation in giving an answer to that straight off, as he must be in a better position, every time he gets assistance, to give his labourer more for the cane grown. Without being impertinent, I would like to answer that in my own way.

1366. Exactly; we wish to get the information, and we desire to get it from you in your own way? For the last five years the farmers in this district—that is, the Wide Bay district—have fought hard to live. They have fought harder than ever Briton fought Boer. That was the position of the farmer. From Watawa, where we used to take 20,000 tons, we were reduced to 1,000 tons.

1367. Was that owing to the climatic conditions? Yes, the drought conditions. At The Cedars, where we used to take off 12,000 tons, it was reduced to 200 tons. How can you raise wages on that? What can the farmer do in the face of that? He wants the seasons to recoup himself. That is the condition of the farmer as we have found him in the last five years. He has been fighting with Nature to live, and he has lived it out. He might be able to afford to give a little more now, but he is a long way down in his banking account and he is trying to work it off.

1368. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think with the increase to 6s. in the bonus next year and the increase in the excise that there will be a corresponding reduction in the price of cane? I think so.

1369. Consequently the position of the farmer will not be affected? He will have his 4s. 6d.

1370. He will be just as he is to-day? Yes.

1371. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything more you think we ought to know, or any information you can give us? I thought if there was any possibility of removing from the workman the temptation that he is surrounded with, so that he may be able to keep his wages which he works so hard to earn, and the Commission could do it, then the Commission ought to advocate it.

1372. In the direction of local option? Yes. The great trouble is that when a man gets a little money he will go straight away to the hotel, and you cannot get him to work when you want him. That is the curse of the industry here, and if something could be done to save the men from themselves, and enable them to keep the money they earn, they would be in pocket by it, and would be able to buy farms, and be able to live well during their four or five months' absence from the plantations in the crushing season. I have noticed also something about the interval. There is an interval between the seasons. For thirty years we have discussed the question of the interval between the cane crushing seasons. We have considered what a man should do during the three, four, five, and six months' interval.

1373. *By Mr. Paget*: That question has arisen during the sitting of the Commission here? One grievous question we have in reference to white labour is the interval. I may state that somewhere in 1867, when we prepared our first land to plant cane, we employed white labour, and for the first seven or eight years we worked with white labour entirely. Then the mining fields broke out, and when the big wages were offering for miners we could not get white labour, and we had to apply to the coloured men to assist us to do the work. But we always felt that it was a hardship to the white man to have to walk about during the seasons.

1374. How would you propose to remedy that? That is a question which my firm has discussed frequently. Only this morning I said that we might be able to cut up our estates into 5, 10, or 15 acres, and give them to the men. Some of them do very good work, and they would be able to do something on these small farms. It is well known to the Commission that there is £20,000,000 entering into the homes of the American people for eggs and fowls. I was speaking to a gentleman the other day and he told me that he bought in a farming district in the Ipswich district 20 tons of eggs to be sent down to Newcastle and baked into sweets. We have thousands of acres of land that the Government might well offer to the men who are now walking about doing nothing.

1375. *By the Chairman*: Where is that land? From Bundaberg right away for 20 miles towards Gin Gin. It is gravely land that would be splendid for rearing fowls on, as they could scrape up the gravel and get a living out of it. These men could settle on this land and start keeping fowls, and in that way they would make a living in the off season. They could get wives and build homes for themselves, and when they were engaged on the sugar plantations in the crushing season their wives could be left behind to look after the home and the fowls, and the farms if they went in for cultivation.

1376. You advocate settling the people on small homesteads? Yes; and it could easily be done, as there is any amount of country available quite suitable for the purpose.

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1377. What areas would you suggest? From 10 to 20 acres.
1378. What would you have for the smallest area—20 acres? If I am not taking up too much time, I would like to draw your attention to a family who went in for a small farm. It is just as well to put it on record to show a man can get a living. There was a man in this district and he lived with his father, his father-in-law, mother-in-law, and sisters-in-law. They took up two allotments of half an acre each in North Bundaberg, and the old man, seventy years of age, tilled the ground and grew English and sweet potatoes, and his wife made jam. They went in for fowls, and by and by they got a horse and buggy, and then they got a few cows. They grew enough feed for the cows, and they sold eggs, potatoes, maize, and jam, and I bought some of their jam myself. The old gentleman worked these two half-acre allotments, and earned more than was necessary to keep the family.
1379. All on 1 acre? On two $\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and Mr. Caulfield knows the man I refer to. And we wonder why there are men unemployed, and why people go to the benevolent and ask for help when an old man over seventy years of age can do all that and keep a house.
1380. *By Mr. Paget:* By intense culture? Yes, by intense culture. I hold that no man has the right to ask for food to-day. There is a means of living on the land for every man if he cares to take it up.
1381. *By the Chairman:* You think 5 acres would do it? Yes.
1382. That would give a man something to occupy his spare time, and he would have a house to live in? Yes. At the present time we pay a Chinaman 25s. a week for vegetables, and I cannot see why my countrymen cannot grow vegetables just as well as a Chinaman. Unfortunately, I have a Chinaman myself, as I said before, because I cannot help it.
1383. I noticed you said "unfortunately," and that was because you could not get anyone else to do the work? Yes.
1384. To put it shortly, your solution of the difficulty of white labour would be to closely settle the unoccupied Crown lands? Yes. A man could then work on the plantation in the crushing season, and have a place of his own in the slack season.
1385. How far is this land from Bundaberg that you speak of? Between this and 14 miles. You can get it from Kolau and towards Gju Gin. There are thousands of acres, and it extends all the way close to the railway line.*

PHILIP LLEWELLYN ELLIOT, Plantation Manager, examined:

P. L. Elliot.

4 April, 1906.

1386. *By the Chairman:* Where is your place? I am manager of Spring Hill and Duncraggan.
1387. What is the area of your plantation approximately? It was originally 1,100 acres.
1388. What area have you under crops? At the present time under my own supervision we have only 350 acres.
1389. Did you cut anything last year? Last year we cut 750 acres.
1390. What class of labour did you employ? Principally kanakas last year. We had a few white men.
1391. *By Mr. Paget:* For field work? Yes.
1392. *By the Chairman:* What wages did you pay the white men for cutting? From 25s. to 30s. a week. They mostly started at 25s., and worked up to 30s. a week and found. It mostly depended on what they did.
1393. Did these men give you satisfaction? Fairly well. They had a very bad block to cut, and it was very hard to tell what they ought to have done.

*The following letter and enclosure were subsequently forwarded by Mr. Gibson by way of correction and amplification of his evidence:—

Bingera Plantation,
Queensland, 5th April, 1906.

The Chairman, Sugar Industry Commission, Bundaberg.

DEAR SIR,—Some of my evidence yesterday relating to cane areas was given from notes I had received from Bingera by telephone, and I now find that correction in some instances is necessary. Appended I send some particulars which I have taken from the records in the Bingera books. Much of the information covers matter referred to in my evidence, but some additional figures have been given to make everything quite clear. I shall be glad if you will append my letter with enclosure to the report taken of my evidence yesterday.

Yours faithfully,

ANGUS GIBSON

Particulars of Gibson and Howes, Limited, Cane Lands.

	Acres.	Acres.
Owned by Company, Gin Gin District (Watawa)	1,150	
" " " " South Kolan District (Bingera)	3,143	
		4,293

Particulars of Registration.

Registered for bounty	3,037	
Not registered	1,256	
		4,293

Particulars of Bounty Cane Cultivation.

Planted by white men, Gin Gin District (Watawa)	900	
" " " " South Kolan District (Bingera, &c.)	800	
		1,700
Leased to farmers, Gin Gin District (Watawa)	1,098	
Worked by Company, Gin Gin District (Watawa)	52	
		1,150
Leased to farmers, South Kolan District (Bingera, &c.)	631	
Worked by Company, South Kolan District (Bingera, &c.)	2,512	
		3,143
		4,293

Remarks.—Further cane lands are now under offer to farmers for lease, and cane areas not now registered for bounty can be registered for 1907 harvesting.

- P. L. Elliot. 1394. Was it their first season at the work? No; they were mostly good men. They cut this on wages, and I put them on to a black labour block, and I found it was costing me 6s. per ton, and I had to stop it. They then offered to cut and load it for 3s. 3d.
- 4 April, 1906. 1395. You will be dependent entirely on white labour this year? We are working with white labour now pretty well.
1396. At what wages? 15s. to £1.
1397. What is the 15s. work? Irrigation and the general work for "boys." The general hands get £1.
1398. You are close to the town? Yes, 7 miles from town.
1399. And do you anticipate any difficulty later on in the season? Yes, I think we shall have trouble when the mill starts and cutting commences.
1400. There will be more competition for labour? Yes. We always take double the number of hands that we require in the slack season.
1401. By Mr. Paget: Have you made any arrangements to try to supply the deficiency? Not at present, because it is rather early to bring men about the place.
1402. Are you trusting to Providence or the Government? No, it is intended later on to get men here.
1403. By the Chairman: You are in hopes of getting men back here that you had before? Yes, we will get several.
1404. You have not written to them? No.
1405. By Mr. Paget: Do any of your men make a practice of going back to you? Yes.
1406. General mill hands? Yes.
1407. By the Chairman: Not field labour? No.
1408. By Mr. Paget: Were the men you employed at cutting and loading last year strangers or settlers in the district? The ones that stopped were mostly men I knew—settlers in the district. We had a lot of walk-about men too—men who stopped a few days and went on. The men who stopped altogether were mostly local men.
1409. What proportion of local men? About one-half. I have a few of them still on the plantation.
1410. And the other half would be continually replaced? Yes.
1411. By the Chairman: It would be to your advantage to get the labour settled here, so that you could get it at crushing time? Yes.
1412. Did you hear the scheme Mr. Gibson proposed? Yes.
1413. What is your idea of such a scheme? Such a scheme as that is the only salvation of the industry.
1414. Do you think it is a feasible one? Yes.
1415. Do you think that men could be induced to settle on 10 or 20 acres; and would they be able to get water and other facilities? Yes; I think they could get water almost anywhere with wells.
1416. What class of country is it? Second-rate grazing country.
1417. Is it ridgy country? Some sandy, and some ridgy, and some good country.
1418. What is it used for at present? Grazing purposes.
1419. Is it let for occupation license? Some of it is. It is mostly Crown lands, and it would depend on the men themselves whether they made a living out of it or not. They would have houses for their families to live in, and the men would be away most of the time themselves earning money.
1420. Would it be a reasonable thing and a wise thing for a man to accept 20 acres to settle down there, holding his labour at the disposal of those who wanted it in the busy season, and working on his own place in the off season? I think the area would be rather small for that. Forty acres would be better, although 20 acres would be all right in good seasons.
1421. You think there are people in the district who would make homes there on these terms? I should think so. I know men very often come and ask me if I will give them a bit of land so they can settle down on it. We have a few men now who live on their own land. They have a few fowls, and keep a horse and buggy, and earn 28s. a week, and they seem to live very comfortably. Of course they are steady men.
1422. By Mr. Paget: Have they any rent to pay? No.
1423. These are married men? Yes.
1424. By the Chairman: What is this country called? I do not know. There is land towards the Elliott River and towards Kolan. That is the land I speak of.
1425. By Mr. Nielson: Can you give us the relative cost of producing a ton of cane by white labour and by kanaka labour? It is just about double with white labour what it is with black labour. You mean for the year?
1426. Yes, for the whole thing? It is about double.
1427. By Mr. Paget: From the furrow to the mill? You cannot get it for one year, and you must take a number of years. Say for five years it would cost on an average £3 per ton with black labour, and £5 per ton with white labour. That is cultivating it in the same way as we cultivate it with black labour.
1428. And does the same ratio apply to harvesting with whites as against kanaka labour? Yes.
1429. By the Chairman: About double? Yes, that is what we always consider it. Every man in the field does 2 tons of cane. We consider it a fair average for a man to cut and load 2 tons a day, and it used to cost us from 1s. 6d. to 1s. 9d. per ton to cut and load the cane and deliver it to the mill.
1430. By Mr. Nielson: Do white men do it for the same? No; you have to pay them 3s. 6d.
1431. That will be the same tonnage at double the price? Yes.
1432. Do you think the continuance of the bonus is necessary for the survival of the industry? Oh, certainly.
1433. By Mr. Paget: Do you crush cane for farmers at your mill? Yes.
1434. Have you many farmers as suppliers? Yes, ten.
1435. Have you any land leased as farms? Yes; we have one small farm.
1436. And amongst the farmers who supply cane to your mill are there any coloured aliens? No.

(Bundaberg.)

THURSDAY, 5 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT :

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*)

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

WILLIAM REES REYNOLDS, Captain of the Labour Vessel "Ivanhoe," examined :

W. R.
Reynolds.

5 April, 1906.

1437. *By the Chairman*: You are a master mariner? Yes; captain of the "Ivanhoe."
 1438. She is a vessel engaged in the island trade? Yes.
 1439. You have had many years' experience in that trade? Yes; eighteen years.
 1440. You know all parts of the groups from which islanders have been recruited? Yes—the New Hebrides and the Solomon groups.
 1441. Until the last few years you were recruiting and returning islanders? Yes.
 1442. You have an intimate knowledge of the whole trade? Yes.
 1443. When was the last trip you made? I returned a fortnight last Monday from the New Hebrides.
 1444. Where you landed "returns"? Yes.
 1445. I believe that a great deal of care has to be taken in landing "returns" that they are landed at their proper "passages"? Yes.
 1446. Any neglect in that respect might lead to the loss of a "boy's" life? Yes.
 1447. Many of the "boys" are from the hill country—What means do you adopt to let the hill tribes know about their return? In the Hebrides we have no trouble about bushmen at all. They are perfectly safe in landing at their "saltwater passage," as they call it.
 1448. Does that apply to the whole of the islands in the group? Yes.
 1449. What about the Solomons? It is very difficult there, especially at Malaya.
 1450. Malaya is also known as Mala, is it not? Yes.
 1451. What do you do in that case? I have never had any occasion to wait there. The "boys" generally meet somebody they know.
 1452. Do canoes come off from the shore? Very often, but we are not allowed to land them in canoes now.
 1453. By what regulation was that stopped? By Queensland Government regulations.
 1454. They must be landed by the ship's boat, with the Government agent on board? Yes.
 1455. *By Mr. Paget*: I presume the islander's friends who come out in the canoe accompany the ship's boat back to the shore? Yes; in all cases.
 1456. *By the Chairman*: How does the hill "boy" let his friends know that he is on board? Really, his tribe does not know in some cases. They can see the ship miles away from land, and, if they are expecting any "boys" home, there is generally someone down to meet them, but not always.
 1457. In cases when there is no one to meet a hill "boy," what course is pursued? The "boy" goes ashore in the boat, and, if the Government agent is satisfied that he has someone there who knows him, he will land him; but a "boy" will never land unless he thinks he is safe. He will not leave the boat.
 1458. I suppose the Government agent is responsible, and not you? Yes. Of course, I do not see from the ship.
 1459. Is there any more delay in landing islanders now than there was when you were recruiting? No.
 1460. Does not a ship lose more time now than in the old days, when you were occupied in taking recruits aboard? No.
 1461. It makes no difference? No.
 1462. There is no necessity for any more precautions than were always taken? No.
 1463. If a "boy" cannot be safely landed he is taken on board again? I have never had a case like that. I have landed three or four at the Commissioner's place at Gavutu—"boys" who asked to be landed there in preference to being landed at their own "passage."
 1464. *By Mr. Paget*: Does the Commissioner see that they are eventually landed at their own "passage"? In some cases he puts his own Government agent on board the ship.
 1465. I was speaking of the islanders who elect to be landed at Gavutu? No; he has accepted them there. There have not been many such cases.
 1466. *By the Chairman*: When you go to the Solomons you have to go to Gavutu first? Yes.
 1467. For what purpose? We have to go and pay for a license. We have to pay £100 a year for a license.
 1468. What privileges are conferred by that license? Only the right to land the "returns."
 1469. How long has that regulation been in force? About four years.
 1470. That is an Imperial regulation? Yes.
 1471. The same license enables you to recruit, if you wish to recruit? Yes.
 1472. Of course, that permission is now valueless to you? Yes.
 1473. Have any representations ever been made to the Commissioner on the subject of altering the license fee, or of dispensing with it altogether in the case of "returns"? I do not think so. On my first landing trip, when I called there, the Commissioner was away, and a trader was acting for him, and the trader said to me, "I think you will have to pay a license fee for landing 'returns.'" However, I did not pay for a license, and went on loading, and the next time I returned there he claimed the license, and said that unless I paid it he would tie the ship up.
 1474. Then the next time you had to pay two license fees? Yes.
 1475. Who was that trader? A Mr. Nelson.
 1476. Is he trading on his own account? He was.
 1477. Is he now? No; he sold out.
 1478. To whom did he sell? To Captain Swensson.
 1479. Is Captain Swensson down there now? No; he has sold out to Messrs. Lever Brothers, of the Sunlight Soap Company.

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1480. Has it occurred to you to make any representations to the Commissioner in the direction of getting the license fee either dispensed with altogether or made lighter for landing "returns"? It is a great imposition on the ship; but when he threatened to tie me up I did not say any more about it.
1481. You do not propose to make any representations on your own account? I am afraid it is no good.
1482. Who is the Commissioner down there? Mr. Woodford.
1483. He is an Imperial officer? Yes.
1484. Is he there now? I think he is there now.
1485. He has been on leave? Yes; but he returned last January.
1486. Have the Messrs. Lever Brothers that you speak of large interests down there? I think they have.
1487. Captain Swenson had large interests there? Yes.
1488. And he has sold out to Messrs. Lever Brothers? Yes.
1489. *By Mr. Paget*: What business are Messrs. Lever Brothers carrying on there—trading, or have they coconut or coffee plantations? I have not been there since they bought the place, but that is what Captain Swenson did. He had plantations, and also stations where he bought copra from the natives.
1490. *By the Chairman*: Where is Captain Swenson stationed? At Florida Island.
1491. Would he work his plantations with the labour of that island or that of the Solomons generally? Not of Florida, but of the Solomons generally—principally Malaya.
1492. And any other labour he could get? Yes.
1493. Did he get any New Hebrides "boys"? No.
1494. Is it safe to take them there? It would be quite safe to take them to Florida.
1495. Are there any plantations at Malaya? No. It would not be safe to take a New Hebrides "boy" to Malaya.
1496. There is no cultivation there? Very little.
1497. It is all done at Florida? Florida and Guadalupe, and north of that, but I have not been north.
1498. *By Mr. Paget*: There are a number of mission stations on Florida? Yes. All the "boys" go to church, or "school," as they call it on Florida.
1499. *By the Chairman*: Are the natives of Guadalupe civilised? They are fairly good.
1500. Malaya is the most dangerous island? Yes.
1501. What wages do they pay the islanders down there? About £6 a year.
1502. The same as they pay here? Yes.
1503. What term of agreement? I think it is twelve months.
1504. Do you know whether, at the expiration of their agreements, the "boys" are returned to their homes? I am sure they are.
1505. Does the work seem to be popular amongst the "boys" on Florida? Not nearly so popular as work in Queensland.
1506. I suppose you have heard the "boys" talk about it? Yes.
1507. Have they given any reason for their preference for Queensland? No, except that they consider the food is not so good there. They are fed on bananas, and yams when they can get them, but bananas and rice principally.
1508. No meat and no flour? No.
1509. *By Mr. Paget*: They get the ordinary island food? Yes.
1510. Then "boys" going from Queensland would not find their conditions so good as in Queensland? No.
1511. If the "boys" want to buy stores, are they very dear in the islands? They are considerably dearer than they are here, with the exception of tobacco, which is the only thing cheaper than in Queensland.
1512. Then the "boys" annual wage could not be expended to as great advantage in the islands as in Queensland? No.
1513. So that, virtually, they would be working at a lower wage in the islands, and not under such good food conditions? That is so.
1514. *By the Chairman*: Have you ever heard of any trouble amongst the islanders there—Is there anything approaching to riots or dissatisfaction? I have never heard of anything. In the New Hebrides I have often heard of them running away.
1515. I am confining myself at present to the Solomons? Never.
1516. Have there been anything in the nature of outrages there? No.
1517. Do you know whether Lever Brothers contemplate enlarging their cultivation, and going across to Malaya? I really could not tell you. It is about sixteen months since I was in the Solomons.
1518. Is there plenty of room still for the expansion of cultivation on Florida? Any amount.
1519. They are not likely to need to go to Malaya at present, then, to extend their operations? I do not think so.
1520. Is Florida a fertile island? Fairly.
1521. The "boys" are perfectly safe in the New Hebrides so long as they land among their own tribes? Yes.
1522. Do you know the island of Sandwich? Yes.
1523. Are there many natives left on it? A good few.
1524. But they are quite peaceable? Yes.
1525. There are a good number of coffee-planters there? Yes. There must be between fifty and sixty Europeans on Sandwich—principally French.
1526. Is Sandwich a place where more labour could be absorbed than they have got now? Not much more, I think. When we were recruiting for Queensland, they found great difficulty in getting labour.
1527. Do you know how they feed the "boys" there? Very much the same as in the Solomons.
1528. And in no case are they fed as well as in Queensland? No. They get just the ordinary island food, and no clothing is supplied to them.
1529. And clothing is dear there? Yes, dearer than here.
1530. *By Mr. Nielson*: What is the reason that the cost of returning "boys" has been increased by £2 a head since recruiting stopped? It is due to the fact that the ships cannot fill up. I am going

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up North from here now with the "Ivanhoe." I am promised a full load, but I am very doubtful whether I shall get a full load when I get to Ingham. It is very uncertain.

1531. *By the Chairman:* At what rates are you taking them? £7 from here, and £7 10s. from Ingham.

1532. Those are the ruling rates now? Yes.

1533. As against £5 in the past? Yes. We are hampered very much by the Queensland Government too in connection with surveying the ship. If we were kept going all the time, we would have to pay £100 in the twelve months for survey fees, which is quite against the Polynesian Act, and also the British Shipping Act.

1534. Are you surveyed every time you come back? Yes—two surveys. A man has to come from Brisbane. If we are surveyed here or at Cairns it causes me great delay. I have to wait for a certificate from Brisbane to pass the ship, and then he has to pass his final survey on again.

1535. What do the surveys cost you? Sometimes they cost me £23 for one trip.

1536. *By Mr. Paget:* That is equal to 3s or 4s. per head on the "return" islanders? Yes.

1537. How many does the "Ivanhoe" carry? One hundred and forty-three.

1538. *By Mr. Nielson:* Supposing the landing charge which is made by the Commissioner in the Solomons were abolished, could you make a reduction in the return passage? Yes.

1539. *By the Chairman:* If you had not to pay that fee of £100 what could you reduce the passage money to? If I were sure of getting a full load without much delay—say a fortnight's delay from the time I arrived here—the "boys" could be taken back for very little over £5. It is the delay that is costing us all this money. Often I have to feed "boys" on board for five weeks, and then they have changed their minds and gone ashore, with the result that I have lost their "passage" money and the food they consumed.

1540. *By the Chairman:* You have to feed them from the time they go aboard? Yes.

1541. What is the cause of this delay in supplying you with "boys"? The boys change their minds, I think.

1542. Surely if it is known that you are going to the islands on a certain date the officials could arrange to have the number of "boys" you want, or enough "boys" to start with? No; that has been the trouble.

1543. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you not think the Pacific Island inspector has sufficient influence over the kanakas to get them to stop on board once they have decided to go? I think they have.

1544. Do you not think that, if he chose to exercise that influence, there would be no trouble? I think so.

1545. *By the Chairman:* In that case would you blame the inspector? No.

1546. *By Mr. Paget:* But the islander is a perfectly free agent. He may either go by the ship or he may re-engage? Yes.

1547. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many trips can you average per annum, supposing there are no unreasonable delays at this end? If I were landing only New Hebrides "boys" from here, I could make between five and six trips a year.

1548. *By the Chairman:* And if you have mixed "boys"? Then it will take much longer.

1549. *By Mr. Nielson:* Could you do the same number of trips to the Solomons only? Perhaps not quite so many. We are hampered in the Solomons by the Government Resident. If he feels so disposed, he will put his Government agent on the ship, and we have to go back to land him again, and very likely lose a week or ten days through that.

1550. *By Mr. Nielson:* Did you have to pay that Government agent too? Yes, at the rate of £250 a year for the time he was on board.

1551. *By the Chairman:* What is he put there for—is not the Queensland agent there? Yes.

1552. Then what is the reason that he is there? I do not know. He is put there just as the Commissioner feels inclined. He does not do it on every trip.

1553. *By Mr. Nielson:* You have to pay him at the rate of £250 a year, and return and land him at Gavutu? Yes, and the delay caused by that is worse than the expense the ship is put to.

1554. *By the Chairman:* There is no settled rule about this Government agent going with you? No. I have known him to appoint the Queensland agent to act for him, and the ship has to pay him too.

1555. You have to pay always? Yes; the ships get a bad time of it.

1556. We were told that you were obliged to go into Gavutu first if you had "boys" for the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands too? That is so.

1557. That would be a disadvantage to you and would delay you? Yes; it delays us fully three weeks.

1558. Owing to what—I know what it is, but I want it in evidence? Owing to the fact that when we call into the Solomon Islands first we have to beat back to the New Hebrides. If we could go to the New Hebrides first we could go up to the Solomon Islands easily. It would make a great difference to the schooner.

1559. Why do you have to go to the Solomon Islands first? Because the Commissioner says so.

1560. Could you not pay that license fee in Queensland where you are known, and go straight to the New Hebrides? No; we have to go to Gavutu to get the license.

1561. Do you not think it possible that the license could be issued by an agent of his over here? I do not see why the ship could not go to the New Hebrides first and then go to the Solomon Islands and get the license then.

1562. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you any idea what is the reason for this procedure? The Commissioner reported that the landing of "returns" at the New Hebrides first resulted in the Solomon Island "boys" buying guns at the New Hebrides, and bringing them ashore at Malaya, but it was not correct.

1563. *By the Chairman:* But the Commissioner was under the impression that that had happened? Yes.

1564. As a matter of fact it did not happen? No.

1565. They could buy guns at the New Hebrides? Yes.

1566. But you believe they did not do so? No, they did not.

1567. *By Mr. Paget:* They could purchase guns very easily at the New Hebrides, and take them ashore if they were allowed? Yes; anyone can purchase guns in the New Hebrides.

1568. *By the Chairman:* Would you, as master of the ship, prohibit the natives from bringing guns aboard the ship? Yes.

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1569. It would be the duty of the Queensland Government agent to stop them? Yes.
1570. Would not that be sufficient safeguard if the Queensland Government agent was there to stop them? Yes; I think it would.
1571. And you think this extra agent is quite unnecessary? Quite unnecessary. The ship is thoroughly searched when she gets to the Resident Commissioner's place; but on this occasion I forget whether the ship was searched or not. As a rule he searches every ship.
1572. On the occasion which gave rise to this new regulation did he find any guns on board? No.
1573. In the event of a large number of islanders being sent back to their islands in a great crowd at a time, would there be a danger of the food supply giving out? At Malayta there would be a danger of that.
1574. There is very little food grown there? Yes, very little.
1575. Is it a barren island? No, but it does not pay a man to make a good plantation. If he does he will not live long, as someone will soon knock him on the head and take the plantation.
1576. At the New Hebrides they will be all right? Yes.
1577. Would there be sufficient food if there was a great influx of "returners"? I think the longer the time given to deport the "boys" the better for them.
1578. It was suggested that the "boys" might be deported at intervals of two or three months, to allow those who were landed to settle down—What do you think of that? How many would you send?
1579. That would depend on circumstances, but suppose you sent a group of thirty or forty at intervals of two or three months? Thirty or forty would not make much difference in the New Hebrides.
1580. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you tell us the average size of the villages in the New Hebrides, and also in the Solomons—that is, the number of men and women there? They vary very much, but taking them at an average they number from 150 to 200; that is, combining the men and women.
1581. They run from a minimum of what to a maximum of what? I cannot say very well, but I do not think there are many villages of over 300 people, and some go down to about fifty.
1582. Who grows the food in the small plantations in the villages on the islands? The women used to do it years ago, but the returned islanders from Queensland do the best half of it now. When I first went down there the women did all the work, and the men just walked about with their gun or club on their shoulder.
1583. Perhaps from your knowledge of the various sizes of the villages you will be able to tell the Commission how many islanders can be safely landed with respect to the food supply at any one of these villages at certain intervals; suppose there was a village of 300 men and women, how many islanders returning could be safely landed at that village without altogether depleting the food supply? I should say from 15 to 20 per cent.
1584. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would there be a greater percentage than that belonging to the one village in Queensland? I cannot say, but I think there would be more than that. I am speaking of the villages on the coast now, as I know nothing about the inland places.
1585. *By Mr. Paget*: In the event of the islanders being returned in batches or small groups to these villages, how long would it take for the village to overtake the food supply for another batch? That would depend very much on the "boys" themselves after they returned.
1586. And the seasons, too? Yes.
1587. Taking the normal seasons, would it take three or four months? They only have one crop of yams a year, but they have nuts, bananas, and taro all the year round. They only have one yam crop.
1588. Does the yam crop come in one month? Yes, just once a year; I think it is in March.
1589. They store these yams? Yes.
1590. The yam is the principal food, together with bananas and taro? Yes.
1591. *By the Chairman*: When do you say the yams come? In March or April.
1592. *By Mr. Paget*: The islanders also get fish on the coast, and that provides food? Yes.
1593. That does not apply to the bushmen? The bushmen buy fish with taro and yams; they barter their yams for the fish at the market place.
1594. *By the Chairman*: Are there any months in the year that you do not go to the islands? The New Hebrides is not a nice place to go to in the hurricane season—that is, in January, February, and March. I was there this hurricane season, but it was the first time since I have been in the trade.
1595. You can go to the Solomons at any time? Yes.
1596. And you do not go to the New Hebrides before April? I go in the beginning of April. January, February, and March are the bad months there.
1597. *By Mr. Paget*: In the case of islanders who have been a great number of years away from their villages and then return to these villages, would they be able to procure food—that is, would it be given to them by those living there until they were able to grow it themselves? From what we see of the "returners" they are always welcome at first, but I am doubtful whether it lasts very long. Probably the welcome is on account of what they have.
1598. Their welcome extends until their "boxes" are finished? I think so. Every "returner" I have landed is most welcome, but the boxes may have something to do with it.
1599. Coming back to the question of islanders who have been many years in Queensland—say ten to twenty years—would there be any difficulty in the way of their getting a livelihood at their villages if they went back as complete strangers? I have landed very few, but there were one or two who were away for that time, and they were all welcome; though I am doubtful if they would all be welcome, and I am inclined to think that they would not be welcome.
1600. I suppose that over such a period of time it is possible that the people belonging to these villages could be wiped out either by disease or fights with other tribes? Yes.
1601. In that case it would not be safe for islanders who have been here for a number of years to be landed at their own villages? That is true.
1602. Your ship is under a bond to land these men at the "passages" where they were recruited? Yes.
1603. What would happen to those islanders when they go ashore if they did not see anyone there that they really knew? They would not land at a place like that, but would sooner return to the ship and remain with some of the friends they made in Queensland.
1604. You think they would do that? Yes.
1605. Are you allowed to do that? Yes, if a boy does not wish to land at his own "passage."
1606. At his own express wish it is done? Yes.

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1607. Do you think it would be necessary in some cases to bring those "return" islanders back to Queensland? If their lives are in danger they might express a wish to come back to Queensland. They say to me, "We no want 'em to land at this place—I go back alonga Queensland." Then it is more than likely after he has met the other "boys" on the ship he will decide to land with them at their "passage" and perhaps on another island.

1608. You know that in the past if a man did not want to land he could re-engage for a further term in Queensland, but at the end of this year the whole business will cease? That is so.

1609. *By the Chairman:* You will be liable for £50 if you bring any "boy" back to Queensland? Yes.

1610. If you come back here with three or four "boys" who were afraid to land, they will be prohibited from landing in Australia and you will be liable for a penalty? We shall have to risk that.

1611. You could ship them as a boat's crew, but you would not be allowed to land them; you could avoid the penalty in that way? They will not allow me to ship them as a boat's crew. If we shipped a boat's crew here we would be allowed to bring them back; but if we engaged a "boy" on the islands he would not be allowed to land here.

1612. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you think there would be any danger of the islanders rising and seizing the ship or steamer if there were a large number on board, say 500 men? Well, it all depends on circumstances. I had some difficulty with them last time. We had forty-nine Tanna men on board and we anchored at Api. I wished to take some ballast on board. Some of the Tanna men wanted to go ashore, and I told them that they could go ashore next day and I would take in some ballast. I said if they wanted to go ashore and help put the ballast aboard they could do so, and they went. On the following day I wanted some wood and water brought on board, but the Tanna men said, "You pay em for working yesterday." I said, "I will give you some tobacco." They said, "No; we want 5s. each." I said, "You wanted to go ashore and I allowed you to go to help to pass the ballast on board." They then said, "We are not going to do any work to-day." I had some other "boys" on board who wished to go ashore and get the wood and water, and they did so while the Tanna men stopped on board. Things did not look at all bright for a few minutes. After breakfast the Tanna men came to me and said, "We want to go ashore and pass the water." It was all over then.

1613. Would you give us your opinion as to whether you think it would be necessary to send a guard on board to prevent any trouble that might arise if there were 500 men sent back in a steamer? It would not be wanted in the New Hebrides, but it might in the Solomons.

1614. And in the event of large shipments being made of returned islanders, we presume that equipments in the way of covering boats would be increased so that there would be no danger to the crew, and that the crew would not be taken from the ship and practically leave the vessel at the mercy of the islanders left on board? We are always at their mercy if they felt that way inclined. We cannot protect the ship as we are now with 150 natives on board, if they felt that way inclined.

1615. The great safety is that they come from various islands and various villages? Yes.

1616. They do not combine, then? No.

1617. *By the Chairman:* They have no firearms? No.

1618. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think it would facilitate the return of the "boys" if the Solomon Island "boys" and the New Hebrides "boys" were as much as possible sent at one time, each to their own group? Certainly. The "boys" can be taken home cheaper that way.

1619. It would cheapen the cost? Yes.

1620. Would you personally be prepared to contract for the return of the islanders now in Queensland? Yes.

1621. Would it cheapen the cost if one shipowner had the whole contract? One ship could not do it.

1622. But one firm of shipowners could; and would not that cheapen the cost? I could not say.

1623. Could you not do it cheaper if you had a contract to return the lot than the way you are doing it now? Yes.

1624. Could you do it at £5, the same as before? It depends on the conditions and the time to have them landed.

1625. How long would it take your two boats to land them all?—Would it take three years? I suppose it would; but we have plenty of boats.

1626. *By Mr. Paget:* Other boats could be chartered? Yes.

1627. *By Mr. Nielson:* When you were recruiting fifteen years ago I suppose the villages were, on an average, the same as now? The population is decreasing on all the islands except Malaita. It is also decreasing in the New Hebrides.

1628. How do you account for that—Is it because of the number of "boys" who have left? That may have something to do with it; but I think the race is dying out.

1629. When you were recruiting, what would be the largest number you ever got from a village of, say, 200 people? Well, you cannot tell, because they come from so many villages; but from the two little islands of Tongariki and Tongoa, in the New Hebrides, I got fifty in a week. There are a number of little villages there. That is the greatest number I have taken.

1630. What would be the population of those islands? I cannot say.

1631. Would the population be 1,000? It would probably be from 800 to 1,000.

1632. And you got fifty? Yes.

1633. *By the Chairman:* That was some years ago? Yes; that was ten years ago.

1634. *By Mr. Paget:* That was about 10 per cent. of the adult male population? Yes.

1635. Do you think that this shortage of food supply is really very great? If you deported all the kanakas there are in Queensland at the present time, in a period of six months there would certainly be no food for them, especially at Malaita.

1636. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think there would be enough food for the New Hebrides men? I think six months to take to deport them would be rather short for the New Hebrides men too.

1637. Have you any knowledge of the number of New Hebrides men there are in Queensland? I reckon there are about 2,000, but that is only a guess.

1638. Have you heard any estimate of the population of the New Hebrides group? No.

1639. Do you think there would be 50,000 or 60,000 people there? I really cannot tell you.

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1640. Do you know whether information can be got from the Commissioner at Gavutu as to the population of the Solomon Islands? It would only be guesswork.
1641. Would he know the population of some of the islands? He might know the population of Florida perhaps, but that would be all, I think.
1642. The island of Malayta is a large island, 100 miles long? Yes.
1643. And 20 or 30 miles wide? Yes.
1644. From your experience down there, does the island of Malayta seem to be fairly well populated? Yes.
1645. And it is a fertile island? Yes.
1646. *By the Chairman:* But they never grow any surplus of food? No; they dare not, really.
1647. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you had any difficulty of late in purchasing island food for "boys" on the return ships? You cannot do it.
1648. In the past you could do it? There was no difficulty at all ten or fifteen years ago.
1649. How does it arise now? We used to buy it cheaply then. We have to pay more for yams than we pay for sweet potatoes in Queensland. The "boys" are not so much inclined to work for small pay as they used to do before. I think that is the reason.
1650. They do not grow a surplus? No.
1651. *By Mr. Nielson:* Could not the Government agent when he went down with one ship ascertain whether there was likely to be a shortage of food for the next three or four months? He could.
1652. He could easily ascertain that? He could ascertain that on the coast, and for those places where he learned a shortage of food was likely to occur, he could delay the return of the "boys" to those particular places. He could get that information quite easily, and the Government could delay the return of the "boys" to those particular places.
1653. On the last trip you went down you could have got that information from the places that you visited? Yes.
1654. Have you any knowledge of the area under cultivation at Gavutu? I have not the least idea.
1655. Have you heard that they have a large plantation there? There is a good deal of ground there, but as to the area of it I cannot tell you.
1656. *By Mr. Paget:* Is there a plantation on Florida? I do not know of any plantation on Florida.
1657. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know who manages for Lever Brothers? I could not tell you, as I have not been there since Lever Bros. bought the place.
1658. This man, Nelson, who acted for the Commissioner, was he a public official before that time? No.
1659. Has the Commissioner never put an official there? He has several men there.
1660. But at the time Nelson was acting? I think he had one officer at that time. I think he had one in the north at Geso.
1661. *By Mr. Paget:* The present Imperial Government agent was not stationed at Gavutu at any time? No; it is only in the last three years that he started to put an Imperial Government agent aboard, only since we started returning the islanders.
1662. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know where Captain Swensson is now? I think he is down there. I did hear that he agreed to manage the place for the Sunlight Soap Company for two years from the time he sold out. I had forgotten that.
1663. Are there many trading concerns at Gavutu? Not at Gavutu. He is the only trader there. The firm own the little island.
1664. Everything is free of duty there? Everything. There is no duty. An employer has to pay the Commissioner £6 a year for every white man he has working for him, and so much for every boat.
1665. *By the Chairman:* What is that for? To provide revenue.
1666. Did you ever see that regulation? Yes.
1667. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you a copy of it? I think I have.
1668. *By the Chairman:* It would be very interesting if you could show it to us? I will have a look for it.
1669. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is there anything else you can suggest that would be of service to the Commission? I do not think so.
1670. *By the Chairman:* Have you anything to say with regard to the safety of the islanders on their return? I think that the more time that is given to deporting them the better for the "boys" and for the people on the islands.
1671. *By Mr. Paget:* No time has yet been stated? That is so.
1672. *By the Chairman:* You would not be in favour of the whole 6,000 being deported in the first twelve months? No.
1673. Or rather, in nine months, because you could not begin till the end of March? I do not think it would be a good thing. There is no doubt a good many will be killed at Malayta if they do that.
1674. And I suppose that might even jeopardise the lives of some of the white settlers? I should not be surprised. I should say two years would be quite short enough, landing so many a month, or so many twice or three times a year.
1675. *By Mr. Nielson:* Of course a great deal would depend on where they were sent to? A good deal.
1676. *By the Chairman:* That would be allowing nine months a year? Yes. Most of our "boys" here are from Malayta, and that is the worst island to land them on, because they have not sufficient food.
1677. It would be very unsafe to land a large number there suddenly? Yes. Even now the "boys" do not believe they are going to be deported. They say, "Oh Government tell us same thing before, but we come back along, Queensland."
1678. The "boys" do not think it final? No. Then another "boy" will tell you, "White man send me home now. I been cut down scrub and do all hard work, and now stop work."
1679. They think the white men got them to do the hard work, and now that it is done they are going to get rid of them? Yes.
1680. Have you heard any of them threatening reprisals in the event of their being deported? Never.
1681. Mr. Caulfield told us he had heard that some Tanna men said that, if they were forcibly deported, they would kill all the white men on Tanna—You have not heard anything of that sort? No.
1682. *By Mr. Paget:* You do not anticipate anything of the sort, with your long experience of the trade? No.

1683. You would take your ship down just the same? Yes.

1684. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is it difficult for a "boy" to get work on the French plantations on the islands? As a rule the "boys" will not work on their own islands. They may work for a day or two, but that does not give the trader satisfaction. Down at the islands they always engage "boys" from other islands. W. R. Reynolds.
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1685. The French are recruiting all the time in the New Hebrides, are they not? Yes; but a French trader on Api could not get an Api "boy" to work for him.

1686. *By the Chairman*: Presuming some arrangement was made whereby the planters down there could be supplied with a large number of men, would that be a better arrangement for the labourers themselves? If the "boys" have to go, I think it would.

1687. You think it would be quite safe enough? Yes; in the Hebrides.

1688. Would they be likely to understand the difference between the food they would get there and the food they had been getting in Queensland? They would quite understand that.

1689. You think there would be no danger in allowing such a thing? Not in the Hebrides,

1690. But I am talking of the Solomons? I really could not say with regard to the Solomons, because I do not know anything about the traders there.

1691. *By Mr. Paget*: If islanders elected to leave Queensland and go to some of the plantations in the New Hebrides, instead of returning to their own homes, do you think they would get an opportunity of returning to their own places in the future if they wished? I think so.

1692. There would be no danger of their being kept against their will? No. But if a "boy" has a home to go to, he will not engage to work on a plantation in the New Hebrides—he would sooner go home; but it would be a good idea for the "boys" who have no homes.

1693. *By the Chairman*: We are told that some of these "boys" have been guilty of tribal offences, and that it is not safe for them to go back to their own islands. It would be perfectly safe for them to go to the New Hebrides? Yes.

1694. Do you consider it safe for "boys" who are married to women belonging to other islands to take those women back with them? It just depends. If they landed at the mission stations, they would be perfectly safe, and the New Hebrides are full of missionaries now.

1695. But on the Solomons? Well Malaya especially has a very bad reputation.

1696. The greatest precautions will have to be taken in dealing with the Malaya people? Yes.

1697. *By Mr. Paget*: There are Malaya "boys" in Queensland who are married to women belonging to other islands? It would not be safe to take the women to Malaya.

Miss FLORENCE YOUNG, Fairymead, examined:

1698. *By the Chairman*: You reside at Fairymead plantation? Yes.

1699. You have for many years taken a great interest in Pacific Islanders? I have been teaching them for twenty-four years now. We began work amongst them in 1882. Miss F. Young.
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1700. During that time you have been in close contact with islanders from various islands? Yes; and all over Queensland. We have mission stations as far as Port Douglas—fourteen mission stations altogether.

1701. What do you call your mission? The Queensland Kanaka Mission.

1702. I daresay it will be more satisfactory to you if you will tell us anything you think likely to be of use to us? Of course, I feel very strongly about the return of the islanders. I have been in Malaya twice, and am going again next month.

1703. You have some mission stations there? During the last two years we have opened a branch of the mission on Malaya with the object of providing for the "boys" who are returning. We have a very large number attending our mission schools. We have an average attendance of over 5,000 every week in Queensland, and we feel very much concerned as to the future of these "boys" who are going back. My own feeling is that a large number of the "boys" are returning without the least idea of what they are returning to. They have been many years in Queensland. They came here as savages, but now they have become accustomed to civilisation, and are not really aware of the condition of things in the islands. I feel quite sure, from my own personal observation, that many of the "boys" do not know what they are going back to. In the old days they could recruit again. There is one particular case I remember now of a "boy" who went down, and directly he saw the condition of things in his native village—well, if you could say that a "boy" could blush, he blushed all over his face and came straight back. That has been the case with a great number, apart from those who are in actual danger of their lives. Perhaps it would be useful to you if I read some extracts from the diaries of some of our missionaries—reports of murders committed there. The first murder reported is that of a "boy" named Thowtonah, at Tarravaia, where we have a mission station in charge of some native teachers. Then on 9th October, 1903, the missionary reports that three men were killed near Tumba, where we have two teachers stationed; and then he says—

Last Sunday morning we heard that a woman and four children had just been murdered about 3 miles away; we heard the drum going.

The mission station at Malu, where the missionary is stationed, has been opened for twelve years. It was opened by a teacher "boy" from Queensland. He held on for four years without any help whatever, and then other "boys" went to his assistance. They carried on the work with great difficulty, but now it is a flourishing mission station. There are about 200 people regularly attending on Sunday, and there are quite a number of Christians, and we now have a white missionary living there. He goes on to say with regard to this murder:—

The murderers claim for payment. On Saturday another poor woman was killed about 5 miles away. Suspected sorcery was the cause in each case.

Of course, I speak principally of Malaya, where it is a well-known island custom, if any person dies, to accuse someone of sorcery. They go to the witch doctor, who says, "So-and-so." Then they go and kill that person. In many cases "boys" have come to Queensland to escape from something of that kind, because, not only the person accused is liable to be killed, but his whole family is sometimes exterminated, and they never rest until they have every member of the family killed. When the "boys" who have come to Queensland to escape this fate go back, the people there are prepared to kill them, because, unfortunately, they have very good memories,

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and they not only remember themselves, but they pass it on from father to son. It is perfectly true, as Captain Reynolds said, that they welcome the "boys" and share their things with them. The life is communistic. They share their gardens, and, as far as I have seen, there is no such thing as storing of food. They just make enough for their bare necessities, and nearly every year they go short during some part of the year. Last winter food was very scarce. We were there for a month, and I was all round Malayta, and we had the greatest difficulty in buying the little native food we required for the six or seven "boys" who formed our crew. If they had a large supply in a village on the coast, there is no doubt the bushmen would come down and fight them for it. The bushmen are very fierce, and they are always at enmity with the saltwater men. They have markets every two or three days, and the women come and do the bartering on the beach. The men stand a little way off and watch the market. If there is no quarrel, they disperse; but, if there is a quarrel, there will be a fight, and lives may be lost. The saltwater men barter fish and saltwater, which is put into bamboos and takes the place of salt. They sell these things to the bush "boys" in exchange for taro and yams; but there seems to be no method of storing food.

1704. Is there any season of the year during which food is usually scarce? I think so. Of course, I have only been down in the winter time, so that I cannot speak of the whole year from personal knowledge. When the crops of yams and taro come in, there will be plenty of food, especially if they have a good season. Last year there was a drought on some of the islands, and most of the crops failed.

1705. Captain Reynolds told us the yam crop is harvested in March? The first year we went down in March and returned in July. The next year we went in July and came back in August.

1706. On those occasions was food scarce? Last time in July there was great scarcity.

1707. Owing to the failure of the yam crop? Yes, and taro. Of course they were just beginning to get the nuts. Malayta is a very densely wooded island, so that it is impossible to make a garden straight away. The trees are 300 feet high, and they have to be cut down before they can plant a garden. The gardens they have are only just sufficient for themselves. If they want to get any extra supply of food they have to clear the land first.

1708. By Mr. Paget: Does that apply to the coast as well as to the bush? Yes. Even a tiny island of 2 or 3 acres will be covered with dense forest. The first time we went down we wanted a site for a mission station. We had taken a house down, and we wanted to put it up straight away; but we found it was not possible to do so until clearing was done. I have a map here of Malayta, which shows Tulagi, where the Commissioner is stationed, and also Gavutu, which is a small island of 20 acres, and has only one house and a trading station on it. There are a few cocoanut trees there. [Map handed to Commission.]

1709. By the Chairman [looking at the map]: Are these places which are underlined the mission stations? Yes. We have three stations where European missionaries live—one at Kwai on the east coast, one at Malu in the north, and one at One Pusu on the west coast. We have teacher "boys" at several other places, and their position is indicated by crosses. The work is all pioneer work at present; the houses were built during this last year.

1710. From what you know of Malayta, would it be unsafe to send back a lot of men there suddenly? I think so. There is a feeling that it would be safer to have a good number. They want the Christians to go to a different settlement, as they say they will make a large settlement, and that will be safer for them, but it will be extremely unsafe for a single "boy" or for "boys" to go back in twos or threes. At Malu they hope to make a strong settlement, and they are building a house to receive them, but they cannot get food there.

1711. They might receive a large number there, you think? Unless they have money to buy rations, I do not see how they can live the first year.

1712. Would you favour the idea of supplying the men with rice and flour there? It would be unsafe, and the great difficulty would be that there would be such a temptation to the others to come and steal it.

1713. Mr. Caulfield said it would not be safe unless you landed a European to distribute it? We hope to form an industrial settlement, where we could receive the "boys" and give them work and keep them together in that way. We could then form a sufficiently strong settlement to offer some protection to them. I do not think myself that there will be so much danger at the mission stations. I have not finished reading these extracts from the missionary's diary from Malu. The missionary is Mr. J. Caulfield, a son of Mr. Caulfield, of Bundaberg. He goes on to say:—

5th December, 1905.—About noon Peter came with the news that on the 2nd Moses Owso, of Suarmar (a place just below Tarravania), was murdered by some heathen. We got ready, and a little before sunset started in the whaleboat for Tarravania, getting there at 1.30 a.m. Before leaving we had to get some men to remain with John Kwaualla at Yerombule, as the Gwaas men were hanging about below the cliff. Saw where Moses was killed. He was working alone about 400 yards from the village when three men came up and pretended to lend him a hand, and when the opportunity offered they cut him down. They are supposed to have come for Jack Sootow, a return from Geraldton. Peter's brother, Owfelo, of Tarravania, and Luk Kwaaleman, from Siuaruar, took the Tarravania canoe and left for Telagi in the afternoon to report the murder and ask for assistance. In the old days they could retaliate, but now they are at the mercy of the heathen, as so far the Government has done nothing unless the guilty parties have been caught and handed over to them. We feel the position very much. *Hardly a week has passed lately without a murder in the locality.* A few days before the murder of Moses a woman was killed at Beenah. We only heard of this to-day.

7th December.—Got back to Malu at 8 p.m. Found John Kwaualla and family had moved to Kalkie for safety, and two "boys" were guarding Yerombule. However, it would appear that the Gwaas people had not been waiting for him, as yesterday they killed an old woman at a heathen village a little towards Siu Harbour from here. She had "poisoned" the Gwaas chief's wife, who appears to have died of cancer.

18th December.—Gwefelu returned this evening. He had a letter from the Acting Commissioner, but nothing satisfactory. They are waiting, the letter said, until Mr. Woodford's return in January.

On New Year's Day a messenger came from the Suarmar people that the heathen were harassing them so much that they had decided to leave their settlement, and they wanted the Malu men to come round for them with their canoes, so I lent the whaleboat also, and nearly all the men went off for them. On our way down we passed them coming up by night. It seems very hard that they have to leave the place where they have put in so much work, but since they reported the murder of Moses to the Commissioner, the heathen have been much worse, saying they would kill them all before the man-of-war came.

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On 3rd January we left Betama plus one passenger, Weli-ba, a boy about two years old; the bush people were going to kill him, having previously killed his father and young brothers. His mother and another child will probably come down later on.

We intended to call at Su for a man who had been wounded by the heathen, but heard that he had been shot, fatally this time. Had there been a whaleboat at One Pusu, this man could have been taken there, but before the "Daphne" could get back, the heathen had accomplished their object, murdering his poor wife as well.

Then the following are extracts from Mr. Watkinson's diary, from One Pusu, Malayta:—

17th November, 1905.—After school I attended to a "boy" who forty days before had been shot just below the shoulder. The bone was shattered. The enemies, hearing that he did not die, came back ten days afterwards under cover of darkness, and ascertaining his position by his breathing fired two shots; one entered the small of his back. He had lived thirty days when I saw him. I did my best, but it was awful through neglect. I hope to bring him down to One Pusu when we get our whaleboat. They intend to kill him.

31st December, 1905.—Quite recently a man was shot at Pila. We wished to bring him down here for treatment, but having no boat could not. Now they have shot his wife and butchered him.

So you see that the murders are very frequent there.

1714. That is quite recent? Yes, the 17th November of last year, the last one.

1715. Have you acquired any knowledge of the circumstances under which men are employed at Florida? Of course, I should think they were practically safe there, as they are all close to the Commissioner; but I do not know whether there is very much being done at Florida.

1716. Has Swensson not got a large cocoanut plantation on Florida? No, he has got one at Guadalcanar Island and one at Russell Island where Lever Brothers are. There is another planter at Guadalcanar making a cocoanut plantation there. They tried to get the labour from Malayta, but the islanders would not go there.

1717. It would not be safe? It would not be safe to land islanders at Malayta unless they came from there. It would be all right for a single man or two to go there, but it would not do to send them in numbers. They would not land there. The natives of Malayta would resent other islanders coming there and using their land. I should not think anyone would attempt to do it.

1718. Do you know anything of the state of matters at Guadalcanar? It is dangerous to land men there, and it is also dangerous on San Cristoval.

1719. What about the labour that Swensson employs? He goes further west.

1720. What is the term of their agreement? Two years. They give them £6 a year, and keep them supplied with native food.

1721. Is it anything like as good as they get here? Oh, dear, no! They get fish now and then when they kill the fish with dynamite. The fish are not easily caught in the islands, and can only be obtained by the use of dynamite.

1722. By Mr. Paget: They do not supply them with clothes? Just calico.

1723. By the Chairman: You think the men generally fear the idea of going back? I am sure they do. I know some who are anxious to go home to their islands, but they will be sorry when they get there, and it will be very unhealthy for their children.

1724. Children who go from Queensland to the Solomon Islands are susceptible to malarial fever? Every "boy" who returns from Queensland gets the fever, and some of them get it very badly. They reckon that in the first six months they will be bad with fever, and a great many of them die from it. It is very unhealthy for them to go back to the islands, as they are fed on food that they are not accustomed to. A large number of them get the fever before they become acclimatised, and a good many die.

1725. You think there will be a high rate of mortality amongst the children? I am certain of it, as a good many we knew died shortly after returning to their islands. Of course, the children who have been brought up in Queensland are not accustomed to island life. The native houses there are extremely insanitary. They are very poor grass houses, and are built underneath the trees, and they are always damp. There is always a great deal of rain there, and even in the time of drought there is always a great deal of rain compared with what we have here; but in the proper rainy season some of these villages are never dry. The houses are all built out of sight. We used to come to places which were marked as big villages on the map, but we could see nothing but trees, as the houses were all hidden beneath them. Some of the saltwater villages are thickly built upon, but the bush villages are scattered. The bulk of the "boys" in Queensland come from the bush and not from the coast. When we went there in our little mission boat the bushmen streamed down from the mountains. They thought it was a labour vessel, and they were eager and anxious to come to Queensland, and they were very disappointed to find that it was not a labour vessel. That was two years ago.

1726. You have given some consideration to the question of the deportation of these Pacific Islanders; but have you evolved any scheme on your own account, or can you give us any suggestion of any favourable method of overcoming the difficulties? We think it very wrong that the "boys" should be forced to go back.

1727. That is a matter we cannot touch? We consider that it is the death warrant of a good many if they are made to go, and there is a reason why they should not go back.

1728. Are you familiar with the New Hebrides? I have just been there.

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1729. Captain Reynolds thinks it would be safe for them to go to the New Hebrides? They will not go anywhere in the New Hebrides where they have to work for Frenchmen, as the Frenchmen treat them very badly.

1730. Does not Captain Rason have supervision over them? No; not if they are employed by Frenchmen. If they are employed by Frenchmen they come under the French regulations, but if they are employed by Englishmen they come under the English regulations, and then Captain Rason has supervision over them.

1731. *By Mr. Paget*: Most of the English are in Santo? Yes. I also went to the islands of Sandwich and Tanna. I only spent four or five days each time I went to Sandwich Island, but I heard a good deal from the missionaries when I was there. They told me that the population of the New Hebrides was decreasing very rapidly, and that was particularly due to disease.

1732. They have had one or two epidemics of measles there? Yes; and the natives have no stamina.

1733. *By the Chairman*: To return to the question of deportation. There are some whom it would be inhuman to deport, because of the fear they have of losing their lives? I think so.

1734. Would you think it inhuman to deport men who were married? I think so, as the married men have children born in Queensland who attend the schools, and are thoroughly civilised, and it seems to me to be a most inhuman thing to send these men back to a state of savagery conditions. Of course those we get on the mission stations, if we are able to provide for them, will be cared for, but to send them back to a native village amongst a lot of heathen people who are living in a savage condition I think that would be cruelty.

1735. There are a few isolated instances where the natives are married to white women? They cannot take them.

1736. There are cases of men married to women of other islands? They cannot take them to Malayta.

1737. And some are married to aborigines of Australia? If they were sent to the New Hebrides they would probably be safe enough, except at Tanna, which is very wild, and also Eromanga and Santo. I have no personal knowledge of the New Hebrides, but I have of Malayta, in the Solomons, and I think it would be most unsafe to send them there. In many cases the husband dies, and if his widow is with her own people they will look after her, but if a woman belonging to another island is taken to Malayta, and her husband dies from fever, then the woman would be absolutely unprotected. If she was with her own people they would look after her.

1738. *By Mr. Paget*: Do the operations of the Queensland mission extend to the New Hebrides? Not at present.

1739. *By the Chairman*: You are only working at Malayta? Just at present that is where we are working.

1740. Is there any part of Malayta where the Christians would be received by your missions? Yes.

1741. Then the question of maintenance would come in? Yes. We could not undertake to support them unless we were able to form industrial settlements there. There are very grave difficulties in connection with these industrial settlements. It is easy enough to start a thing, but you want to start a thing that you know you will be able to carry on. It is no use getting the "boys" there and making a beginning, and then have it break down.

1742. The cost of clearing would have to be considered? Yes; and there is a difficulty in obtaining land.

1743. It would take twelve months before you would get a crop? Yes; at the very least it would take twelve months. You see you have to clear the land and turn it over, and have it made suitable for growing crops. It is difficult to clear the land. The way the natives do is to make a garden on the side of the hill, and they depend on gravitation to help them get rid of the logs and trees. The mountains are 4,000 feet high in Malayta.

1744. *By Mr. Paget*: Speaking of industrial settlements, would they be worked for the profit of the mission? We have not yet formed our plans. If we start industrial settlements we want to make them self-supporting, and also to enable the natives to earn money for themselves. At present Malayta has nothing to export. It is not like other islands which have copra. There are very few cocoanuts there, and there is very little cultivation, and there is nothing to induce traders to come there, because there is nothing to purchase, and the people have no money to buy with. They have hardly any cocoanuts on the island, and cocoanuts do not return anything for six or seven years.

1745. *By the Chairman*: You have in connection with your mission Christianised natives of other islands? Yes.

1746. What do they propose for themselves—to go back to their own islands or somewhere else? The New Hebrides "boys" will go back to the New Hebrides, and they will go to the mission stations there.

1747. Have you any Christian men from Malayta? Yes; large numbers. Many of them will go back as teachers; but we find, so far, that it is not much use putting a teacher anywhere except in his own "passage." The people will listen to him in his own "passage," but if he goes to another "passage" he will meet with some difficulty. So far, we find they do better work in their own "passages."

1748. The Christianised "boys" are willing to return at once? No; they are not willing to return. They do not want to leave Queensland. A great many of them are feeling it, and they are trying all sorts of plans to avoid going back to their islands. Many of them have been told that if they own land they will not have to return, so many of them are trying to get land so that they will not have to go back. Some of them, in trying to get land, go to out-of-the-way places and take up selections in order to avoid going back.

1749. Do you know many about this district who own land, or else carry on farming or gardening? There are some at the Isis, some at Yandina, and several others down the line.

1750. *By Mr. Paget*: There are a good number at Nambour? Yes; and they filter down to the Tweed River district, as they think they will escape there.

1751. *By the Chairman*: There are some at the Isis? Yes.

1752. There are a good many in the northern part of the State? Yes; there are a good many at Rockhampton.

1753. Do you know the North? Yes; I go North every year on superintending work. There are also a good many at Halifax.

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1754. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you a branch of your mission at Rockhampton? No; not at Rockhampton.
1755. *By the Chairman*: There are a great number of kanakas at Rockhampton? Yes; private people have been holding classes, but I do not think they have a mission there.
1756. There are a great number of married kanakas at Rockhampton? Yes; there are a great many married ones living on farms and so on.
1757. As regards deportation, have you thought of any scheme that will minimise the deportation—We must take it for granted they will have to go, or at any rate, the bulk of them will have to go? I have not thought of any scheme.
1758. We are trying to get ideas? We hope to form industrial settlements, and that will minimise the danger and the difficulty. But I do think the food question will be the great difficulty for the first couple of years.
1759. Have you any whites at your mission stations? We have three European teachers at present.
1760. Where are they? All the mission stations are marked on that map I have handed in. The head mission is at One Pusu, and the others are all underlined with red ink.
1761. If it were necessary to send a supply of food, it would be safe if it were sent to the care of your mission teachers? I think so.
1762. *By Mr. Nielson*: It could be distributed by the missionaries? Yes.
1763. *By the Chairman*: It would not lead to any danger then to send the food supply there? It might lead to danger. Mr. Woodford is at Tulagi, a little island of a few acres, and he has a few native police, but his police are dreadfully frightened of the Malayta "boys," and they would not go to Malayta to arrest anyone. The only thing that they are frightened of at Malayta is a man-of-war, and there is no man-of-war there at present. The "Pylades" was there, but she has gone home.
1764. *By Mr. Paget*: And it would take a month or two to bring the man-of-war there when it was required? Yes. If any trouble arose they used to send for the "Pylades," and she would come and shell the village, and kill the pigs, and set the houses on fire.
1765. *By the Chairman*: It is rather peculiar to shell the village to restore order, but I suppose it is the only thing they can do? Yes. The natives have been getting worse lately because they find that they can commit murders with impunity. There is a tribe of them who go about head-hunting. They make a raid upon a village, and if there are a number of people working in their gardens they will shoot down one or two. Then they will go to another place and do the same, and there is no means of stopping it.
1766. *By Mr. Paget*: They go head-hunting for profit? I do not think they do it for profit.
1767. Do they not sell the skulls? I do not think they get anything for them. It is for the pure joy of killing. They like it. It is a savage land, and they live under savage conditions. It will take some time to civilise them.
1768. *By the Chairman*: Great precaution will have to be exercised with regard to the Solomon Islands, at any rate? Yes.
1769. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you furnish us with a list of the number of islanders attending your missions in Queensland? We cannot give the accurate number of "boys" because our statistics do not show all the "boys." We can give the numbers attending the classes, but one "boy" may come again and again.
1770. Have you any annual report? Certainly. I have got copies of the annual reports with me, and you may have them. These are the last two annual reports of the mission.
1771. I happened to know of this report, but I wanted to get copies from you? Well, these are the last two, and they give full particulars of the work, especially in the Solomon Islands.
1772. *By the Chairman*: We may keep these copies? Certainly.
1773. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would not the unmarried "boys" be all right when they got back to their tribe? Not in all cases.
1774. I mean those are not "wanted" for anything? They might or they might not. It just depends on circumstances. I think it is very dangerous for a "boy" to go back with very much possessions, as he might be killed, just for the sake of getting his things.
1775. *By the Chairman*: Captain Reynolds thinks that if they divide them it will be all right? Yes, but suppose they are not willing to divide?
1776. Then perhaps there would be coercion? Yes.
1777. *By Mr. Nielson*: A little moral suasion would be introduced? Yes, and their possessions would not last long.
1778. Have you a schooner at the mission in the Solomons? Yes, a small boat—a 10-ton boat. If the traders down there want to trade, they have to pay according to the tonnage of the vessel and a capitation fee besides. I think it is unjust to charge a capitation fee on the missionaries just because they are not ordained.
1779. *By the Chairman*: They have to pay a poll tax? Yes, and they are entirely engaged in mission work.
1780. Is that fixed by the Imperial Government? Yes. Unless a man is ordained, he has to pay the capitation fee.
1781. *By Mr. Paget*: What does it amount to? £5 a year.
1782. Have you to pay for the native teachers as well? No, only for the Europeans.
1783. *By the Chairman*: The missionaries have all to pay this £5 a year? Yes; they are supposed to be protected for that. It is to pay for the cost of government, and to protect you. That is the idea, but you do not get much protection.
1784. *By Mr. Paget*: In the event of some of the New Hebrides teachers going to Malayta, would they have to pay a capitation fee too? No; there is no capitation fee for the natives, but every European has to pay if he is not ordained. Norfolk Islanders also have to pay.
1785. But a Norfolk Islander is not a European? They reckon him as such.
1786. *By the Chairman*: Then a Pacific Islander married to a white woman would be liable to pay a poll tax? The woman does not pay, only the men.
1787. Do you think there is anything more you can tell us; you have given us a great deal of valuable information; is there anything else that occurs to you that we have not spoken about that it would be useful for us to know? I do not think so.
1788. Can we keep these extracts of your taken from the missionaries' letters? Certainly.

JOHN EDMUND BARROW HAMMOND, Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Bundaberg, examined:

J. E. B.
Hammond.
5 April, 1906.

1789. *By the Chairman:* You were for several years employed as a Government agent? Yes, between the years 1887 and 1893.

1790. During that time did you make many trips to the islands? I made over twenty trips.

1791. To the New Hebrides and to the Solomons? To both groups.

1792. *By Mr. Paget:* Since that time have you been engaged in the Pacific Island Department? It is only quite recently that I came into the Department again.

1793. *By the Chairman:* During the time you were Government agent you acquired a great deal of knowledge of the islands and of the islanders and their train of thought? Yes.

1794. Has any scheme occurred to you by which the islanders can be deported after 31st December? It will take some little time to send them away after the 31st December. In the first place, the difficulty will be to get the necessary vessels chartered.

1795. *By Mr. Paget:* But in the event of a steamer being chartered? I would suggest that steamers should be used.

1796. *By the Chairman:* Would you suggest that the two groups should be dealt with separately? No.

1797. With a steamer it would not matter so much? No. A steamer could go anywhere. It is not like a sailing vessel, where you have to rely on the winds.

1798. What effect would this large influx of men have on the food supplies of the islands? It would not matter in the New Hebrides, because they have a fair supply of food there all the year round.

1799. But have they such a supply as would meet the needs of the newcomers? I think so. I never saw any shortage there except after a hurricane, and then they always had plenty of coconuts.

1800. What about the Solomons? It is a very different matter there. There they are more often hungry than not.

1801. How is that? I do not think they cultivate like they do in the New Hebrides. In fact, I do not think it would do for them to cultivate and store up food, as it would be stolen. In the New Hebrides, after the yam season they dry the yams and make a sort of biscuit and put it in storehouses, and that lasts them all the year through.

1802. The Solomon Islanders simply live from hand to mouth? Yes.

1803. Then a great deal more care would have to be exercised in landing "boys" than in the New Hebrides? Yes.

1804. Would you favour the idea of landing food with the "boys" in the Solomons? It would be useless doing that, unless you had some European to distribute it. The idea is all right; but the other fellows on shore would steal the food if it was landed with the "boys." It would have to be placed in the charge of the Administrator or the missionaries.

1805. Could it not be placed in charge of the chiefs? The chiefs would immediately appropriate it. There is no security in property there.

1806. There are several people trading down there. You have heard of Captain Swensson?—Do you know him? I have heard of him in years gone by.

1807. Have you heard anything of his operations down there?—We are told he has sold out to Messrs. Lever Brothers? So I have heard.

1808. Do you know what labour he employs? When I was down there he had nothing but a copra station, and he used to buy the coconuts from the natives. He was principally trading round in a vessel and collecting copra. He had no actual plantations.

1809. He has plantations now? He must have acquired them lately. I have no personal knowledge of his having any.

1810. What labour did he employ? He would pick up a few "boys" from Ysabel, or some of those islands, and take them about on his ship, but he would not dare to leave one of them unless on his own island. It would not have been safe.

1811. Captain Reynolds told us there is a good deal of cultivation now on Florida? I believe there is. In my time it was rather wild there. It was the head station of the Melanesian Mission.

1812. Does the mission still work from there? I believe so.

1813. Do they cultivate at the mission station? They did not in those days. The "boys" at that time used to have to be paid to go to school—they had to get so many sticks of tobacco before they would go.

1814. *By Mr. Paget:* You are speaking of many years ago? I am speaking of from twelve to eighteen years ago.

1815. *By the Chairman:* Are you in touch with the Pacific Islanders about here? I have a good deal to do with them.

1816. Do you know how they view the question of deportation? They do not view it with favour. A lot of them do not want to go back.

1817. Have you any scheme in your mind of how the deportation should be carried out? The position seems to be that it will not be safe to deport them until the end of March on account of the hurricane months? That does not apply to the Solomons. If you have a steamer it does not matter whether there is a hurricane or not. A steamer can always run for shelter. You always get twenty-four hours' notice of a hurricane.

1818. You are inclined to think that steamers will be the best craft to use? Undoubtedly.

1819. They can work in the hurricane months? Yes; at all times of the year.

1820. How would you set about the work of deportation? I should charter a steamer, or steamers. Say, "There are so many 'boys' to go home. How much a head will you take to return them to their islands?"

1821. Would you call for tenders? Yes.

1822. *By Mr. Paget:* You have told us that in your time there was never any surplus food at Malayta—What would you do if you were sending home a large number of Malayta "boys"? Malayta is a very large island—100 miles in length by 30 miles wide—and there would only be a small number of "boys" landed at each "passage." The "boys" would be distributed among all the "passages" round the coast, so that it would not make so much difference.

1823. You must bear in mind that the difficulty of repatriating the "boys" is that they have come to Queensland during a period extending over several years. Whilst only four or five "boys" might be

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- recruited at one time from any one "passage," there might be 50 or 100 to be returned now to that "passage"? I do not think fifty would make any material difference at any "passage."
1824. *By the Chairman*: Even though they do not store food there? I do not think so.
1825. *By Mr. Paget*: You do not foresee any difficulty in connection with the food supply? No.
1826. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you any idea of how many Malayta "boys" there are in Queensland? I suppose there are 1,500 or 2,000.
1827. They will have to be distributed among, perhaps, fifty or sixty different "passages"? More than that.
1828. Do you think there would be many more than twenty or twenty-five for one "passage"? There might be.
1829. But in the bulk of cases there would be very few for any one "passage"? Yes.
1830. *By Mr. Paget*: How many villages are there, for instance, in the Maranasike Passage? It is lined with villages right through.
1831. Do the islanders recruit from all those villages? Yes.
1832. *By Mr. Nielson*: As a matter of fact, very little is known of the island of Malayta except the "passages" on the coast? Very little. Nobody knows anything except those who go in the boats.
1833. Do you know if there are many bushmen in Malayta? Not a great number, because the island is too narrow. They can always get across to the saltwater very quickly.
1834. So far as you know, Malayta is a fertile island, on the whole? Very fertile.
1835. *By the Chairman*: Do you know anything about the treatment Pacific Island labourers receive at the hands of the French in the New Hebrides? They are badly treated.
1836. Are they badly fed? Badly fed and badly treated.
1837. Underpaid? I do not think they get much pay. They are very lucky if they do.
1838. Is there any official supervision of French employers of labour? None at all.
1839. Is there any supervision of English employers of labour down in the islands? There was not in my time, but I suppose there is now.
1840. Labourers going there would not be happily situated if they were in the employment of Frenchmen, then? I think the labourers would refuse to work for a Frenchman. I had an instance of that a few months ago at Lugham, when I was relieving there. There were some "boys" from the New Hebrides whose time would expire next July. Their employer wanted to sell his estate and transfer these "boys" to two Frenchmen. The Frenchmen were very nice men, but the "boys" refused to be transferred. When I asked them why they refused, the only reason they would give was, "No; me no work alonga 'Oui-Oui.'" The "boys" in the New Hebrides always call the French "Oui-Oui," and they say, "Me no work alonga 'Oui-Oui'; too much cross—too much cruel."
1841. They have a bad reputation among the islanders? Yes; and it follows them as far as Queensland.
1842. Have you seen anything of their treatment of the islanders? I have seen great cruelty practised by them. I have seen natives shot down by Frenchmen in cold blood for the least thing—dozens of them.
1843. That was some years ago? Yes; but I do not think the French have altered much in their nature since then.
1844. You are an old-time Britisher, I see? Well, I am only talking of what I have seen. I remember once, when I was at Port Sandwich, where the French had military barracks, with a commandant and a small body of troops, all of a sudden we heard the bugle-call "Guard, turn out!" and they started to fire furiously at some canoes crossing the bay. We went ashore to see what they were doing, and it appeared some natives were supposed to have stolen something, and the troops simply shot at and murdered those natives in cold blood. That was not an unusual occurrence. Some of their proceedings were revolting.
1845. It has been suggested to us that some residents of the Solomon group might be willing to find employment for the "return 'boys'" who have nowhere else particularly to go to. Can you offer any opinion as to how islanders would fare down there as regards treatment? If they were under British supervision they would be all right.
1846. But you do not know whether there is any British supervision there? No. In the first place, I question whether the New Hebrides "boys" would go to the Solomons.
1847. *By Mr. Paget*: The question is whether Solomon Islanders would go to such a place in the Solomons? —
1848. *By the Chairman*: Have you heard any natives of the New Hebrides threaten reprisals in the event of their being deported? No. I think that does not enter a kauaka's head—he is too good-natured.
1849. *By Mr. Nielson*: We have heard of "boys" going on board a labour vessel to go back to their islands, staying on board some time, and then changing their minds? I believe that was the case in regard to the "Ivanhoe"; but she was lying such a long time in the Mary River. I think it was the fault of the owners. They advertised the boat to go at a certain time, and then put it off, and the "boys" naturally got tired.
1850. As a rule the Pacific Island Inspector would have sufficient influence over the "boys" to be able to persuade them to go home, once they had gone aboard the boat? But the inspector is not allowed to persuade "boys" against their will. He is not allowed to persuade them to do anything.
1851. But you are allowed to give advice, are you not? We give them advice, but, if they do not want to go home, we cannot compel them to go.
1852. There is a difference between compelling and persuading? A "boy" will come and say he wants to go home. We put his name down. He comes back a few days afterwards and says he has changed his mind, and I do not think the inspector would go further than to say, "Very well, my boy." He is not interested in the matter.
1853. *By the Chairman*: Do you think there is likely to be any difficulty in getting "boys" to go who do not want to be deported?—Will there be any danger of their secreting themselves? I think that when the time comes a lot of them will do that.
1854. Clear away back? Yes.
1855. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you had any connection with the Labour Bureau? Yes; I was officer in charge in Rockhampton for about two years.
1856. *By the Chairman*: Did many men register with you? A good number.

- J. E. B. Hammond. 1857. Were you able to find situations for them satisfactorily? No. We had about 400 the first year I had the bureau.
- 5 April, 1906. 1858. *By Mr. Paget*: What year was that? 1903.
1859. *By the Chairman*: Did employers make free use of the bureau? No; very little use.
1860. They preferred to go to the private registry offices? Yes.
1861. Can you account for that? No.
1862. *By Mr. Paget*: Are there many employers in Rockhampton and the vicinity who did make use of the bureau? There were a few. Of course, times were bad in the West then.
1863. Did the Western employers use the bureau? They used it in the previous good seasons. There was not much demand for labour when I was there. It was a very bad time with the drought in the West; but, of course, that is no criterion.
1864. You have had no experience of the bureau in Bundaberg? I have had to deal with the men here lately, registering their names, and finding employment for them if people applied for them.
1865. Mr. Caulfeild is your superior officer? Yes.

GEORGE LIVINGSTONE, Storckeeper and Hawker, examined:

- G. Livingstone. 1866. *By the Chairman*: What is the nature of the information you have to give the Commission? I know a good deal about the "boys" and the way they have been treated.
- 5 April, 1906. 1867. We are not concerned about that—Sending them away is the only thing we want information about? I can speak on that. I think that of late a good many more "boys" would have gone away only there is a restriction placed on them. They have been charged an extra £2 for going home. The time before last, when the "Lady Norman" was going out, a lot of Solomon "boys" left Bingera. They all wished to return home, and they applied for tickets at the inspector's office, and they were refused a passage. I wired to the Premier—

The Chairman [to the Court Orderly]: Would you be good enough to ask Mr. Caulfeild, the Polynesian Inspector, to come and hear what this witness has got to say?

Mr. Caulfeild later appeared in court.

The Chairman: Mr. Caulfeild, we have a witness who is giving us some information about the rates charged on the vessels, and we thought that he might tell us something that you would be able to clear up. The witness says that a number of "boys" would have taken their passages home but for the increased cost of passages. *[To the Witness]*: Will you go on from there?

Witness: Several "boys" I know told me that they went to the Polynesian office and asked for a passage back to their islands.

1868. Here in Bundaberg? Yes, they applied at the office here. They wanted to go away in the "Lady Norman" on the last voyage. The "boys" came in from Gibson's place at Bingera. They were Solomon Island "boys," and they applied to the Polynesian Inspector for a vessel home, but they were told that they would have to pay £2 extra, as it would cost £7 for their passage home. The "boys" would have gone if they could have got away by that vessel, but they objected to pay the extra £2. The "boys" were walking about the town for a considerable time until they spent all their money, and then they went to Walker's place at Knockroe. If this extra £2 had not been imposed, the ship would have been filled up rapidly, and a few more hundred "boys" would have been able to go home to their islands.

1869. Do you say that these "boys" had to pay this £2 themselves? Yes, they were asked to pay the extra £2. There was an action brought against Bingera for detaining a "boy" from going home not long ago, and the case was dismissed on account of the boy cancelling his agreement three weeks before his term expired. This "boy" is in town yet.

1870. From what source do you get your information? I got it from the "boys" personally, and I have proof that it is true.

1871. *By Mr. Nielson*: Who asked the "boys" to pay the £2? The Polynesian Department here.

1872. *By the Chairman*: But who asked them to pay? I do not know who was in the office, but Mr. Caulfeild might know.

1873. Is there anything else you want to tell us? Not particularly. I know a good deal about the white labourers, as I often camped on the plantations at night, and have been at the mills.

1874. Can you give us any information about the way the white labourers are housed and treated? I think the white labourers are treated just as bad as the "boys."

1875. Are you not inclined to take a pessimistic view of the whole position? Not after I have been with them and slept in the same place with them. I am speaking the truth, and I think I am justified in speaking the truth, and I can prove everything that I say to be correct.

HENRY ST. GEORGE CAULFEILD, recalled and re-examined:

- H. St. G. Caulfeild. 1876. *By the Chairman*: You heard what the last witness said? Yes.
- 5 April, 1906. 1877. What is your version of it? In the first instance it was supposed that the "boys" would have to pay this extra £2. It was afterwards found that the employers had to pay. We had explicit instructions from the Pacific Island Department that no islander's name could be put down on the outward list unless the £2 was provided for. Either the Department, the islander, or the employer had to pay the extra £2, and the Department was certainly not going to take any liability. We were instructed not to put any islanders on the return list unless the extra money was provided; the instructions of the Department were carried out, as it was our duty to do, and the "boys" resented it, of course. They brought a case against Gibson and Howes and the defendants won the case on the ground that these particular islanders had voluntarily cancelled their agreements. Since then the Department has issued instructions informing us of the extra cost of returning the islanders, which cost is to fall on the last employer. Those instructions, I need hardly say, are now being carried out.
1878. What about the "boys" being debarred from going home? I entered those "boys" names on the outward list, although they told me they would not go. So as to give them every opportunity of going by that ship, I left their names on the list till I went aboard, and I gave them an opportunity of going aboard up till the last minute. I then had to score their names off just before the vessel left. The "boys" did not go, as they wished to test the position legally, and I do not blame them for doing so.
1879. Have some gone home since? Yes. As regards these eleven or twelve "boys," they had Savings Bank accounts amounting to £220, so they were a fortunate lot of "boys."

(Bundaberg.)

FRIDAY, 6 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

Mr. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*)

Mr. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

THOMAS WILSON SLOANE, Cab Proprietor, examined:

1880. *By the Chairman:* I believe you are anxious to give evidence before this Commission? Yes; with T. W. Sloane. reference to the deportation of Pacific Islanders. I think it would be unfair to insist upon some of the islanders going back to their islands. Some of them have been here for over twenty years, and some of them are married to women who do not belong to the same islands as themselves. 6 April, 1906.

1881. Have you any other reasons? In many instances, if they go back, they are likely to meet with ill-treatment. After their long residence in Queensland they will be almost strangers in their islands. I think that those men should not be sent away, but that they should be sent up to the Northern planters, who should give them 15s. a week and rations, and take out a license for each kanaka they employ of £10 a year as a guarantee of good faith that the kanaka will contribute reasonably to the revenue of the State.

1882. You are aware, I suppose, that such a scheme would necessitate fresh legislation? On that one point, possibly, but fresh legislation would be better than inhumanity.

1883. Could you like to say anything more on that point? If they were sent North, they would be a benefit to the Northern planters. The coming cancutters would, in the course of a few years, become acclimatised in the Southern districts, and then they would be able to go to work in the North. The State would benefit by the adoption of my suggestion. I do not wish to say that the kanaka should compete with the white man, because the white man's requirements in life compel him to contribute a certain revenue to the State. The kanaka's requirements are not the same, and therefore I hold that he should be handicapped.

1884. I believe you have given some attention to the invention of a labour-saving machine? Yes; a canecutter. I have a canecutter which men who are competent to judge admit is the greatest advance that has yet come forward. I do not pretend to perfection. Our harvesting machine was not as perfect when it was first brought out as it is to-day, and the canecutter is just on the same lines. I have gone into the thing differently to most men. I say that cane will have to be planted to suit the machine. I am not inventing a machine to cut cane as it has been planted in the past; but, when they plant cane to suit the machine, they are planting it also to allow better treatment from the beginning to the finish, in the way of weeding, trashing, and everything else. I can suggest a scheme for planting cane that will be an advance on the present system.

1885. Have you ever made a working model of your machine? We have had a very rude machine. Unfortunately, I am not a man with money, and I have to depend on somebody else. I took in a man on condition that he financed the whole thing. He was to take a half-share, and I was to have a half-share. His son was an engineer, and he was to build the machine.

1886. Was the machine built? No. Evidently they got into the invention simply to hold it back.

1887. Have you patented it? It is patented. They were willing to buy the patent themselves, but that is about all they cared to do.

1888. What would be their object in retarding the invention? They have reasons of their own. If they could fire me out for a few pounds, the thing would go along, but they can't.

1889. But surely the invention of such a machine would be in the interests of the cultivator of cane? This man is very much interested in the kanaka, and he thinks nothing can be right unless the kanaka is in it.

1890. Your idea is that he was afraid it would ensure doing without the kanaka? Most decidedly.

1891. *By Mr. Paget:* You are aware that the Federal Parliament has said that the kanaka shall be done without? Yes.

1892. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything more you can tell us? Yes. I consider that the consumer of sugar has a right to demand a fair rate of pay to those employed in the industry.

1893. That is a matter which the different associations will probably regulate amongst themselves—Are you referring to sugar-workers' wages generally? Yes.

1894. Is there any fixed scale of wages? To my mind, the men employed in the sugar industry should receive 7s. a day.

1895. How many hours a day? I should fix it at nine hours a day.

1896. That is fifty-four hours a week? Yes.

1897. Is there anything else you wish to tell us? I consider it advisable to let or give 5 acres of inferior land—such as there are some thousands of acres of in this district—to men who are willing to work in the sugar industry, not for the purpose of growing sugar, but of making homes for themselves. On those areas they might grow flowers for perfumes, and they might also gather the leaves of the ti-tree, which grows in abundance here, to make eucalyptus extract from. That would give the men employment in the slack season. The mills round here have any amount of boiler-power, which they could utilise in the off season for the purpose of extracting these perfumes.

1898. Is there anything else that has occurred to you? We do not want a system of immigration at the expense of the country. We want to get men who are willing to marry and settle down on these small areas, and their offspring would be able to assist in the sugar industry. The State is now paying a bonus of 4s. 1d. per ton on the cane. That is all right, but there are men here who were very well satisfied, before there was any bonus, to lease land on a royalty of 1s. per ton, but since the bonus was granted they are claiming a royalty of 2s. a ton. They are claiming 25 per cent. of the bonus, which, I hold, is for the worker and not for the landowner.

1899. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know of any case where the royalty has been increased since the bonus came into force? Yes, it has been increased at Windermere and also at Rubyana. It has been increased there to about 4s.

- T. W. Sloane. 1900. You told us that you thought kanakas should be employed in the North at 15s. a week and rations—
 Why don't you think that they should be paid 7s. a day as well as the white man? I would provide for
 6 April, 1906. that by imposing a license fee of £10 a year.
1901. That is only equal to 4s. a week, which makes 19s. a week for each kanaka? I only mentioned £10
 by way of illustration. It is only right that the planters in the North should be assisted to get off their
 crops, but they have no right to be assisted with cheaper labour than the South Sea growers, and you could
 increase the license fee to £20 or £30 a year. Very likely that would be a fair rate to charge on all the
 alien races who are not accustomed to the treatment of the Britisher, who has certain surroundings and
 dignities to maintain.
1902. *By Mr. Paget*: In suggesting this wage to the kanaka, you expect the employer to feed him?
 Yes.
1903. In suggesting a white man's wage of 7s. a day, he would have to feed himself? Yes. There is
 one objection to the planters providing the men with tucker. If the employers would erect boarding-
 houses on their plantations, and let them to men who would board the men working on the plantations at
 a reasonable rate, it would be much better than the present system. It would encourage the men to stay
 there over Sunday.
1904. *By the Chairman*: Are you aware that there has been recent legislation passed dealing with the
 accommodation provided for sugar workers? I am aware that legislation has been attempted, but it is
 not satisfactory. I think the legislation should insist upon the establishment of the boarding-house
 system. If men were obliged to cater under competition, the men would get better value than they do
 under the barrack system.
1905. Have you read the Stearers and Sugar Workers Accommodation Act? No.
1906. Well, if you buy a copy of it and read it, you will find it very instructive? I am making my
 suggestion and not going by that. I consider that it would be better to encourage men to pay board.
 At present the planter does not pay his men with rations. He simply pays him a wage and allows him
 to fossick for himself, so far as food is concerned.

MALVINI, Pacific Islander, examined: (Mr. J. E. B. Hammond, Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders,
 acting as Interpreter for the witness and the three following witnesses.)

- Maluini.
 6 April, 1906. 1907. *By the Chairman*: What island do you belong to? Malayta.
1908. Where did you work last? Mackay.
1909. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are you married? Yes.
1910. Are you married to a Malayta woman? Yes.
1911. How many years you stay alonga Queensland? Twenty years.
1912. Did you go home, or did you stop in Queensland all the time? I stop here all the time.
1913. Have you spoken to any men from your own village who have been there recently? Yes.
1914. Do you want to go home? Yes, I want to go home.
1915. Are you frightened to go home? No; I am not frightened.
1916. You are not frightened to go back to your own island? No.
1917. Are any of your relatives and friends still at your village? Ob, yes; plenty.
1918. Why did you come down from Mackay to Bundaberg? I come down to go alonga boat back
 home.
1919. Are you going home? Yes.
1920. And your wife and children, too? Yes.
1921. *By the Chairman*: How many children have you got? Three.
1922. I thought there were four children? One died at Gladstone.
1923. Where is your wife? She is still at Gladstone, and will come down to-night.
1924. *By Mr. Nielson*: What do you want to explain? I went to speak to master.
1925. What master? Master who look after "boy."
1926. *By Mr. Paget*: You mean Mr. Rannie, Assistant Inspector of Polynesians at Mackay? Yes; Mr.
 Rannie.
1927. *By Mr. Nielson*: You complain of being out of pocket through having to come down from
 Mackay? Yes.
1928. Did Mr. Rannie tell you to come down here? Yes.
1929. He told you to come here and buy 'em passage? Yes.
1930. Where you work last time? Mr. Campbell, alonga The Palms.
1931. Whe addid you finish working for Mr. Campbell? I no finish agreement when I left Mackay.
1932. You broke your agreement? Yes; he no want 'em "boy."
1933. How long ago you break 'em agreement? Thirteen weeks.
1934. You lose 'em your money? Yes.
1935. How much money you lose 'em? £9 10s. alonga Mackay.
1936. Which way you lose 'em? I had to pay my passage alonga ship.
1937. *By the Chairman*: You mean your passage alonga steamer? Yes, and this ship too.
1938. *By Mr. Nielson*: You pay your passage this ship to take you back to the island? Yes.
1939. How much you pay altogether? £9 10s. altogether, for steamer and return fare in schooner.
1940. *By Mr. Paget*: That is the extra amount for your return fare? Yes, for myself, my wife, and
 pickaninny.
1941. Did you pay your passage alonga steamer from Mackay to Bundaberg? Yes.
1942. *By the Chairman*: How much did you pay? I paid £1 15s. for myself, and £1 15s. for my
 missus.
1943. *By Mr. Paget*: Did you pay anything for your pickaninny? Yes, I pay £1 15s. for big
 pickaninny.
1944. That is your eldest child? Yes.
1945. *By Mr. Nielson*: That is £5 5s. What is the other £4 10s. for? I pay £4 for the schooner
 passage.
1946. Well, there is another 10s. I paid £1 5s. for train fare from Gladstone to Bundaberg.
1947. That is more than £9 15s. Yes; I pay £10 15s. 2d. altogether.
1948. You have to buy food here in Bundaberg? Yes.

Malwini.

6 April, 1906.

1949. You have to buy sleep, too? No; only ki-ki.

Mr. Hammond: Captain Reynolds says he could have gone on the ship yesterday if he had liked.

1950. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you got a box? Yes.

1951. You got money in your box? No money now; money all finished.

1952. *By the Chairman:* Where is your money? I spend 'em on myself, wife, and children. I had no work for three months, and had to buy food for myself, wife, and children.

1953. Have you any money in the Savings Bank? No.

1954. *By Mr. Nielson:* Why you not go home before? I thought Queensland wanted "boy" all the time.

1955. *By the Chairman:* You thought they always wanted you to work? Yes.

1956. *By Mr. Nielson:* There are plenty of "boys" at Mackay who want to go home? Yes; but they got no money to pay passages home.

1957. *By the Chairman:* There are plenty of "boys" wanting to go home, but have no money to pay their passages? Yes; they have no money.

1958. *By Mr. Paget:* Did these "boys" break their agreements like you did? Yes.

1959. Did all the "boys" break their agreements to go home? Yes; some wanted to go, and some wanted to stop. Government would not let them go, as they have no money to pay passages.

1960. *By the Chairman:* Who would not let the "boys" go home unless they paid their passages? Rannie Government and Hornbrook Government.

1961. Mr. Rannie and Mr. Hornbrook wanted you to pay your passages first? Yes.

1962. *By Mr. Nielson:* Did you ask Mr. Campbell to pay the extra money for your fare home? I ask him, and he said I have to pay passage myself.

1963. *By the Chairman:* You asked your last employer to pay the extra £2, and he said he would not? Yes.

1964. *By Mr. Nielson:* Did you ask Mr. Rannie or Mr. Hornbrook to speak to your employer and get him to pay your passage money? Yes; Mr. Hornbrook ask Mr. Campbell.

1965. What did Mr. Campbell say? He said he would not pay passage. "Boy" would have to pay himself.

1966. *By the Chairman:* They asked your last employer, and he refused to pay? Yes.

1967. *By Mr. Nielson:* Suppose ship give passage for nothing, plenty "boy" go home? Oh, a lot.

1968. Plenty "boy" stop at Mackay no got 'em work? Oh, plenty.

1969. And no got 'em money? No got 'em money, and want to go home.

1970. *By the Chairman:* Those "boys" no got 'em work at Mackay? Plenty work there, but only white man work now.

1971. No work for "boys"? No.

1972. If "boys" go to Mossman they get work there? Oh, plenty work.

1973. Suppose those "boys" get work at Mossman, would they go? Yes, they go quick.

1974. They cannot afford to pay their own passages? No.

1975. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know if there is any work at the Mossman? Yes, some "boys" already go up, some more signed to go up, and some more would go if they could.

1976. *By Mr. Paget:* Did you say some have signed and not gone up yet? No; those who stopped did not sign agreement.

1977. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you want to get that money you paid for your passage? Yes; I want 'em back.

1978. *By the Chairman:* You think you are entitled to it, and that you ought to get it back? Yes.

1979. You think you ought to have £10 15s. 2d. in your pocket? Yes.

1980. *By Mr. Paget:* Is there anything more you would like to say? No more.

1981. *By the Chairman:* Are you missionary "boy"? No.

1982. You go along a school? No.

1983. Your children go to school? No.

1984. Your children talk English? Yes.

1985. Can they read the letters? No; they no go to school.

1986. *By Mr. Paget:* Did your pickaninny not go to school at Walkerston? No. Me long way from Walkerston, and too far to go to school.

MANATAH, Solomon Islander, examined:

1987. *By the Chairman:* Where you come from? Uru, near Kwai.

1988. *By Mr. Nielson:* How long have you been in Queensland? Twelve years.

1989. Have you been home since you first came here? No.

1990. Do you want to go home? Yes.

1991. Have you heard from any of your friends and relations lately, or you get 'em message from your father, mother, or brothers? Yes; they want me.

1992. They want you to go home? Yes.

1993. Is there plenty of food at your "passage"? Oh, yes, plenty ki-ki there all the time. No hungry there.

1994. Where did you come from? Mackay.

1995. Are you going home in the "Ivanhoe" that ship in the river? Yes.

1996. Did you pay your passage of £2? Yes.

1997. Who been tell you to pay that £2? Mr. Rannie.

1998. Where you work last time in Mackay? Mr. Bryson.

1999. *By Mr. Paget:* Where Mr. Bryson's place? Plane Creek.

2000. *By Mr. Nielson:* Did you ask Mr. Bryson to pay your passage? No; I no ask him.

2001. Did you ask Rannie to ask him? Yes; and Mr. Rannie told me he would not pay.

2002. Did you break your agreement alonga Mr. Bryson? Yes.

2003. How long ago? One week before Christmas.

The Chairman [to Mr. Hammond]: There was no regulation then?

Mr. Hammond: No; the regulation was not issued until the middle of January.

2004. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you got a box? Yes.

Manataha.

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- Manatah. 2005. Plenty in it? Oh, a little; not much.
 2006. Have you any money? No.
 6 April, 1906. 2007. Have you got a wife? No; no savee.
 2008. *By Mr. Paget*: You got 'em Mary alonga island? No.
 2009. *By the Chairman*: What did you do with the money you had? Eat 'em.
 2010. How much money did you have when you were paid off? £6 13s. 3d.
 2011. *By Mr. Nielson*: You got 'em money in Savings Bank? No.
 2012. You no save 'em money? No.
 2013. You like to get back that money you pay alonga passage? No.
 2014. You no want 'em that £2 back? Oh, yes; I want 'em.
 2015. *By Mr. Paget*: You break 'em agreement? Yes.
 2016. What name Government speak alonga you? Mr. Rannie.
 2017. Did Mr. Rannie tell you if you broke your agreement you pay your own passage? No; I want to go home.
 2018. Did Mr. Rannie tell you, "Suppose you break 'em agreement close up Christmas, Government tell you you pay passage"? No; he not been ask me.
 2019. *By Mr. Nielson*: Supposing you go home by this boat, and Mr. Caulfeild sends you the £2 by some other boat, do you think you will get it? I do not think so. I too far from salt water.
 2020. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you know of any more "boys" from your village who are now in Queensland? No.
 2021. None to go home with you? No, me the last.
 2022. How many miles is your village from the ship? If me start 6 o'clock, me get there 7 o'clock at night.
 2023. *By the Chairman*: You belong to the mission school? No.
 2024. Your tribe sometimes go down to salt water when boats come in? Sometimes they go down.
 2025. They go down to get salt water and ki-ki sometimes? Yes.
 2026. One fellow go down one week? Two, three, four fellow.
 2027. Do they go down every week or every month? Sometime every week; sometime not so often.
 2028. Can you see the ship from your village? No.
 2029. *By the Chairman*: How did you see the ship when you came to Queensland? When ship come up, me down at salt water.
 2030. *By Mr. Nielson*: You only one fellow? Yes.
 2031. You no frightened to go home? No.
 2032. Suppose you stop at your "passage" and no friend there, you walk longa bush? Yes.
 2033. You no frightened salt-water "boy" when you walk longa bush by yourself? No; me no frightened.
 2034. *By Mr. Paget*: When you go by the schooner, will some of your friends stop longa salt water, look out for you? No. Me leave box longa salt-water friend, then me go to my friend by myself.

LUMACONA, Pacific Islander, examined:

- Lumacona. 2035. *By Mr. Nielson*: What island you belong to? Malayta.
 6 April, 1906. 2036. You belong same "passage" longa Manatah? Yes.
 2037. Not same village? Yes.
 2038. You come Queensland same ship Manatah? Yes; but not same time.
 2039. How long you been stop Queensland? Twelve years.
 2040. You come from Mackay? Yes.
 2041. Where you work there? Mr. McCready, of Palmyra.
 2042. You break agreement? No. Me finish three years.
 2043. When you finish? Last time me work Farleigh.
 2044. When your agreement finished at Farleigh? Four weeks ago.
 2045. Have you paid your passage money home? Me pay £3 15s. 6d.
 2046. Who told you to pay that? Mr. Rannie and Mr. Hornbrook.
 2047. Did you ask your master at Farleigh to pay passage? No.
 2048. Did you ask Mr. Rannie and Mr. Hornbrook to pay? Yes; they say, I pay myself.
 2049. When did you ask them? Last week, when I wanted to come down here.
 2050. How much money had you when you left Farleigh? £8.
 2051. Have you any money in the bank? Yes, about £10.
 2052. Have you got a box? Yes.
 2053. Have you got plenty for your box? Nothing.
 2054. Have you any money? No.
 2055. You have not lost your money, have you? Me lose some, buy tucker, buy some clothes.
 2056. What clothes you buy? Trouser and shirt me wear, and trousers and shirts in box. Me buy things for my box now.
 2057. How much money did you draw when you left Mackay? £10.
 2058. Where is your box? My box longa George Livingstone.
Mr. Nielson [to Mr. George Livingstone]: Have these "boys" either goods or money?
Mr. Livingstone: This "boy" seems to be the only one. He brought his money down. The others purchased their goods in Mackay.
Mr. Nielson: But have they any goods?
Mr. Livingstone: Yes; and they have been put on the ship with various things in them.
Mr. Nielson: You heard the last "boy" say that he had not much in his box. Do you know what he has got?
Mr. Livingstone: I could not tell. The boxes were taken from the station, and put on the ship.
 2059. *Mr. Nielson [to Witness]*: Do you want to get that money back again that you paid for your passage? Yes.
 2060. Do you think, if the Government sent it down by the next boat, you would get it? I think so.
 2061. You go down salt water? No.
 2062. Suppose Government send you message, you get him? Too far go down salt water.

2063. Do you know plenty "boys" want to go home, suppose their passage paid? Yes.
2064. Do you know any "boys" who have not got the extra money to pay their passage? Plenty have no money like to go free.
2065. *By Mr. Paget*: How many "boys" do you think there are in Mackay who have no money but who want to go home? A good many—close on 100.

Lumacons.

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SASSACK, Pacific Islander, examined:

2066. *By the Chairman*: What island do you belong to? Ambrym.
2067. How long have you been here? Twenty-two years.
2068. Have you been home? I have never been home since.
2069. You belong to the Salvation Army? Yes.
2070. Are you married? No.
2071. Can you read and write? I can read, and I can write my own name.
2072. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know any New Hebrides "boys" here who want to go home, and have not the money to pay their passage? Yes. I hear a good many New Hebrides "boys" say they have no money to pay their passage, and they say the £5 is all that should be paid.
2073. They think that plenty? Yes.
2074. Are there many Ambrym "boys" here? A good few in Bundaberg.
2075. With no money? Yes.
2076. Do they want to go home? Yes.
2077. *By the Chairman*: Would they go now if they got the chance? Yes, they would go straight away if they got the chance in the "Ivanhoe."
2078. *By Mr. Nielson*: And if anyone paid their passage? Yes.
2079. How many do you know who would like to go home who have no money? I could not tell you how many, but I can soon find out.
2080. Suppose you find out, you tell us Saturday night? Very well.
2081. You want to go home yourself? I have applied to be admitted into the Salvation Army Training Home in Melbourne.
2082. What are you going to do there—Do you want to go back to Ambrym and teach? Yes.
2083. Only you want to learn a bit more first? Yes.
2084. *By the Chairman*: Have you had any answer to your application? Yes. They sent me a form to sign every answer—whether I am married, and so on. I have done that, and then they sent me another form to go to a doctor to be examined, and I got a letter last night that I am to go to Melbourne.
2085. When do you think you will go? At the end of this month.

Sassack.

6 April, 1906.

JOHN EDMUND BARROW HAMMOND, Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders, further examined:

2086. *By the Chairman*: Are there any Solomon Islanders about here who would go if their passages were paid? I do not think so. In Bundaberg they all know about the passage money.
2087. *By Mr. Nielson*: You have had information about it for over a month? Yes.
2088. Don't you think the same instructions were sent to Mackay? Undoubtedly. They were sent to all the inspectors.*

J. E. B.
Hammond.

6 April, 1906.

GEORGE PHILIP BARBER, M.L.A., examined:

2089. *By the Chairman*: You know exactly what we want, so if you will give us any information that G. P. Barber will help us we will be glad to receive it—We want to find out amongst other things whether there will be sufficient labour here for the future, and, if not, how that labour can be attracted and retained here?
- Yes, I have made a note of that.
2090. I will not interfere with you at all, but let you give your evidence in your own way? Well, I notice from the evidence already tendered, especially by the planters, that they seem to view with considerable apprehension the prospect of a shortage of labour in this district. I differentiate between the planters and the growers, and when I say planters I mean the large proprietor mostly. I do not think, so far as I know, that there is a solitary planter who has the slightest conception of the present supply of labour in the district, chiefly, I believe, because they have not taken the trouble to ascertain. We people in Bundaberg have been used to these kind of scares, I might call them, for the many years I have been here, something like fourteen or fifteen years now; and yet when the season has come round our chief difficulty has been to find work for the large body of men that gravitate towards the centre of this district.
2091. *By Mr. Paget*: From Brisbane and other places? Yes, from Brisbane and other places. Now, for instance, it is the general practice here for the men to commence congregating in the town and in the immediate vicinity of the town nearly two or three months before the crushing begins. This year, partly, I presume, through the passes having been too easily granted, especially from Brisbane, there have been a large number of men gathered here ever since the beginning of the middle of February, and the difficulty became so acute that the other week, while I was in Brisbane, I had an interview with the Chief Secretary. Owing to the reports appearing in the metropolitan Press, wires which were sent from Bundaberg, and also because of the news which appeared in the local Press here, I interviewed the Chief Secretary on the subject. I told the Chief Secretary that it was not right for the Brisbane people to be leading this community up with a lot of unemployed, and that it was ample time to send these men along at the end of May. Now for the past few years there has been a considerable number of petty thefts and robberies going on in Bundaberg through these people being sent up here, and others who have come up by train and "on their own" from outside. Despite that fact, I think I am quite correct in saying that there is not a solitary planter in Bundaberg who has taken the trouble to ascertain the quantity of labour available in Bundaberg for the coming season. Many of these are men who follow the sugar season here year after year. Some of them, I know, are unsuited altogether for the work.

*After the close of the proceedings for the day, Mr. Caulfield handed to the Commission the following telegram received by him from Mr. Rennie, Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Mackay, relative to the statements made by Maluini and Maratab regarding the increased charge for passage money:—

"Numbers 13 (Lumacons) and 14 (Maratab) elected pay own extra charges and go at once rather than wait employers who are contesting legality of demands to pay for them. Numbers 15 (Maluini) and 16 man and wife received ten pounds more than demanded by Department on cancellation of agreement and employer holds this more than sufficient. Rennie."

- G. P. Barber. 2092. *By the Chairman:* You mean some of the others who have come here? Yes, some of those who have come here are unsuited for the work; but I totally disagree with the statement made by Mr. Cattermull and others, the other day, that a large number of the men who come here are unsuited for the work. My connection with the sugar industry has only been in connection with the Millaquin Refinery, where they employ a very large number of men, but I am quite right in saying that not more than from 15 to 17½ per cent of the number of men who come here are unfit for the work. I had a lot to do with large numbers of men while I was at the Millaquin Refinery, and I know I am quite right in saying that, and there are various reasons that could be given that tend to make these men unsuitable. Now, I am quite prepared to admit that say 17½ per cent. altogether are unfit for the work. Some of them are physically unfit for the work, some earn a few shillings, and then they what we call "knock it down" at the first hotel, and for three weeks or more they are unable to work, as they cannot secure the necessary food to make them physically fit to do the work required. Some of the men are reduced in circumstances owing to their own folly, and they have to sleep under a tree or in the bush. Then there are others in such circumstances that they are unfit to do the work.
2093. You say they amount to 15 to 17½ per cent. altogether? I would not go higher than 17½ per cent. I think I am quite correct in making that statement. There are men who I am positive would come here if the conditions were better, as they have been for one or two seasons. But what do they find when they come here? They find that the conditions which prevailed in the past prevail in one or two cases now. There is one plantation in this district which has not made the slightest attempt to carry out the provisions of the legislation passed during the last session.
2094. For the accommodation of labourers? Yes. On the large properties, until quite recently, the sanitary conditions were abominable, closets being placed in the vicinity of sleeping rooms.
2095. That will be altered now? Yes; but men became so disgusted with the wretched conditions that prevailed that they took very strong exception to any further connection with the sugar industry. Probably some of them will return when they know of the improvement in the sanitary condition, sleeping accommodation, and living arrangements. No self-respecting man would work on some of the plantations owing to the wretched conditions that prevail. The planter has only himself to blame for the position that has been created, and he is responsible for the strong antagonism that exists between the majority of the workers in the district and the planters.
2096. We are only interested in inquiring whether there is enough labour for the industry, and how it is to be kept here—the improved housing accommodation that has now to be provided will tend to keep the labour here? That is so. One thing that I think comes within the province of the Commission is that the planter says he must have reliable labour if the industry is to be carried on successfully. I am prepared to grant that; but, as the representative chiefly of the working man here, I hold that, if the planter wants reliable labour, it is only logical and right that the worker should ask for reliable employment. Now, from the Tweed right away to the Mossman, directly the crushing is finished, the white men—and good men too—have been sacked, and the planter has not cared a rap where they have gone to.
2097. That has been simply because the farmer did not require their services, as he had labour of another description—He is going to lose that labour now, and we want to find out how labour is to be provided for him? That is one feature, but the planters have been able to play a pretty strong game of bluff. At every opportunity they have dispensed with the white man; they have not been loath about committing breaches of the Pacific Island Labourers Act in getting "boys" to cut firewood and do work that is distinctly illegal.
2098. *By Mr. Paget:* How many years were you working at Millaquin? About five years.
2099. Was there very much trouble in connection with the men employed at Millaquin? Very little.
2100. Were the men employed there local residents, or were they men who travelled to the district in search of work? The men who worked during the refining season were largely local men, and probably twenty or thirty men would come along during the season. During the juice season they would probably have 130 or 140 men from outside.
2101. Men travelling into the district? Yes.
2102. Was there more trouble in connection with men who travelled into the district in search of temporary employment than with local residents—that is in the way of men not being suitable for the work? No; because I had charge of the raw sugar department, in which we employed a large number of men, and I consider myself a fair judge of a man's capabilities, and we had plenty of men to pick from. If a man went away and indulged in drink, my practice was to give him one opportunity of retrieving himself. If he did it again, he would have to go. We were in a position to pick and choose.
2103. Then, the refinery being practically in the town, you had the pick of the men who came to the district? Yes.
2104. *By the Chairman:* We are told by Mr. Caulfield that there are between 250 and 300 men in the vicinity who are out of employment, irrespective of the local men who are out of work—Have you any idea as to whether that is a fair estimate? I believe it is.
2105. Mr. Caulfield says there are 150 to 200 local men out of employment? I do not think there is that number. Some of them may have two or three days' casual labour; others are going out wood-cutting, stone-breaking, and things of that sort. As soon as the sugar season starts they drop all that.
2106. You said you thought it desirable to find work for those men during the off season—Will not those men be required in the cultivation of cane after the Pacific Islanders have to leave? A large number of them will find work in that way.
2107. What wages does the ordinary man get at Millaquin? 5s. 6d. to 6s. a day and find themselves. Of course in the more important jobs their wages were much higher. A few years ago no one worked under 6s. a day. Since the 6d. was knocked off there has been a certain amount of discontent.
2108. We have been told that the minimum wage paid to an able-bodied farm labourer is £1 a week and rations—Now, is not a man as well off with £1 a week and rations all the year round as a man who is getting 6s. a day and find himself at Millaquin? As a family man I would say "No." I believe there are more men getting less than £1 a week doing field work than there are getting £1 a week.
2109. You say that the men at Millaquin are getting 5s. 6d. a day, and it is not absolutely permanent? There are a few breaks.
2110. Taking those breaks into consideration, is not a man who gets £1 a week and rations all the year round in a better position than the man with 5s. 6d. a day without rations? I do not think so. A man

who is paid in cash has an advantage, because he is in a position to buy what he chooses. I notice from G. P. Barber, the evidence given before the Commission that the tendency is to say that the value of rations is about 10s. a week; but I would guarantee to cater for feeding the men as they have been fed for years at 6s. a 6 April, 1906.

2111. And find a cook for them? I would cook myself.

2112. You would have to pay yourself? Yes; I would guarantee to keep them for 6s. a week; and, if they would give me 10s. a week, I would make money. Of course that is for a considerable body of men. You could not do it for a half dozen men. Where you had twenty or thirty men you could.

2113. *By Mr. Paget*: One or two witnesses have said that they were paying £1 a week to their field hands and allowing them 8s. a week in lieu of rations, and married men had cottages, wood, and water given them for nothing—Now, would those men be as well off as the man on Millaquin who gets 5s. 6s. a day and has to pay for his food? I should say he would. That would be equal to 35s. a week.

2114. *By the Chairman*: We have evidence that that wage is paid? Yes; but I do not think 20 per cent. of the men on the plantations are getting that.

2115. *By Mr. Paget*: The evidence showed that single men could also receive 8s. in lieu of rations, and keep themselves? That is quite possible.

2116. They would pay no house rent? No; but that is only on one plantation—that is not the general rule.

2117. *By the Chairman*: What do you think a fair price for ordinary field labour? I should say that a reasonable minimum rate should be not less than 27s. 6d. a week and rations

2118. For work all the year round? Yes.

2119. How high should it go if 27s. 6d. is the minimum? Say 30s.; but I wish to differentiate between the cutting season and the slack season.

2120. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you suggest those rates for the slack season? Yes; for ordinary cultivation.

2121. What would you think a fair price for cutting and loading—Have you ever seen that work done? I did it myself years ago.

2122. What do you consider would be a fair price? I think 35s. a week and rations. I know it is higher than the general average, but I think it is worth it.

2123. How many hours per week? I do not see how you could work it less than fifty or fifty-four hours a week.

2124. *By the Chairman*: Mr. Lutz, one of the witnesses, said that on a 15 to 20 ton crop a man could make 10s. a day? Yes; in untrashed cane.

2125. He allowed 9d. an acre if it was untrashed cane, the price he gave for trashed cane being 2s. 6d. a ton—Of course a man would have to work hard to earn 10s. a day? That is so. The average man would not make that in that crop. A "ringer" might.

2126. I suppose that the rate of wages must be fixed by what the industry can pay? That is so.

2127. Do you think any farming will pay the rate you have named—27s. 6d. a week and rations? I think so under the present conditions with the bonus.

2128. But the bonus might not be here always—Do you think it could pay that rate without the bonus? No. I think there will have to be a reduction if they do not get the bonus. If I understand the Act at all, the bonus was chiefly granted in the interests of the field-growers.

2129. You think the bonus ought to go to the field worker? A large proportion of it. We have been told here that white men could not do the work; then we were told that they would not do it; and now, when it has been proved that they can and will do the work, the planter says he cannot get them. They shuffle round so that you hardly know how to pin them down.

2130. *By Mr. Paget*: I think you misapprehend a little what the witnesses have said—In this district the impression seems to be that during the current year there will be no difficulty—The difficulty may arise after these 6,000 kamkars are sent from the State? One or two of the witnesses expressed that opinion.

2131. *By the Chairman*: There does not seem to be any apprehension here as to the labour for this season? Well, Mr. Nott stated that the labour would not be available for this season.

2132. Of course high wages will attract men to the district; but can you suggest any other means by which they may be induced to settle here so that they will not need to go away to look for work after the current year? So far as Bundaberg is concerned, I do not anticipate any trouble in that respect. With the local residents and the number of men who will naturally gravitate here, we shall always have abundant labour.

2133. Would it not be to your interests to have as many local residents as you can get—there is no danger of overdoing it? Oh, yes; you can overdo it.

2134. Considering the areas you have available for settlement, you think there is a danger of overdoing it? I think so, if you attract too large a number here.

2135. But is there any probability of that? I think so.

2136. *By Mr. Paget*: But, if there was a large local population, could not some of these settlers go to other districts? Exactly. I was just going to point that out. What some of us have advocated for many years as the practical solution of the trouble is the cutting up of the large estates.

2137. *By the Chairman*: Well, seeing you cannot make a man cut up his estate, would you be in favour of cutting up Crown lands in the district that are available for settlement, so that men could make their homes on these lands, and go to the cane-growers in the district to work for them? I would, but I do not know where you are going to get land of good enough quality within a measurable distance of Bundaberg.

2138. Do you know some land out Kolan way? Not too well. I have been for a drive that way a few times.

2139. We are told there is a quantity of second-class pastoral land there, upon which you could grow things with a little care—Would that sort of country be suitable? I could not say. I am not sure about the quality of the land.

2140. The land is said to be distinctly pastoral land, but it is better than wallum country? I think it would be a splendid experiment.

2141. Would it be an experiment regarding which there would be some hopes of success. I have my doubts.

2142. Would you approve of such a scheme of settlement if the land were good? Yes.

G. P. Barber. 2143. What area would you offer to people? Eighty acres of cultivable land. Of course a man would want to have a few acres to run a little stock.

6 April, 1906. 2144. Is not 80 acres a pretty big farm for a man to handle who has to work with his hands? I presume he would have a family growing up, and it is surprising the amount of work a man can put into a farm.

2145. Then you probably think he would require 160 acres—80 acres of arable land and 80 acres of grazing land? Yes; from 100 to 160 acres. There might come times of severe drought such as we have had during the past three or four years, when there was no demand for these men, and then they would either be confined to their farms or have to go somewhere else.

2146. *By the Chairman:* Have you any more information to give us? Mr. Courtice, the secretary of our union, was asked about contracts. I think if the planters could arrange with the union, the members of the union could take contracts themselves.

2147. *By Mr. Paget:* You mean the Sugar Worker's Union? Yes; it was recently established here. I think the union will have a pretty close knowledge of the abilities and character of the men that arrive here. I think a great deal of good work can be done that way.

2148. *By the Chairman:* Has the union approached the planters? The union was only formed a week or two ago.

2149. It is hardly in existence yet? No.

2150. What number of members has the union got? So far they have between 100 and 200. The secretary is out organising now, as a matter of fact. In addition to that I think the Labour Bureau here can be made far more effective and efficient than it is. Then, again, I am of the opinion that if it were possible we should make, say, all the police stations, and even the railway stations, places where up-to-date information can be posted up in some conspicuous place. I do not mean to make the railway station-masters labour agents, but the labour necessities of the district can be sent there and posted up in conspicuous places. For instance, when a man is walking from Brisbane, or even if he is coming up in the train, he is unsettled in his mind, and is like a ship at sea without a rudder. He says to himself, "I will go up to Bundaberg." Then he will say, "I will stop at Maryborough, and camp, and have a look at the railway station, and see the list." If he does that, he will perhaps see that there is a certain amount of labour required at Bundaberg.

2151. You think that the state of the labour market in the district should be posted weekly at the police and railway stations? Yes; I think it would do an immense amount of good.

2152. I think it would, too? If that were done we should never have a congested population here.

2153. *By Mr. Paget:* You suggest that the labour conditions of Bundaberg should be posted at Maryborough, and the labour conditions of Maryborough should be posted at Bundaberg and other places? Yes, so that all the centres would be in touch with each other.

2154. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything else you can tell us, as we are anxious to get all the information we can? I think that is all the evidence I can give.

2155. Have you any experience of Government Labour Bureaus.—Do you know anything about them and how they have been worked so far? I know the usual thing is to register your name.

2156. It has been suggested here that it would be in favour of the more adept working man if every man carried about with him a certificate showing how long he had been employed at the last place: for instance, if a man is a stranger and is carrying a swag on his back he might not get any work, but if he can show a discharge from his last employer he will be snapped up, whereas if he was a doubtful-looking man without a discharge he would be allowed to pass? I quite agree with that.

2157. You know it is a system that is at work amongst the shearing community now? That is so.

2158. You would be in favour of such a scheme? I would; and I think it would be largely endorsed by the members of the Sugar Workers' Union. I suppose it would not be necessary for the men to bring a written account of the planters they worked with as to whether they were good, bad, or indifferent.

2159. *By Mr. Paget:* Yes; the men could do that if they wished? They will not require to do it, as the characters of those gentlemen are generally conveyed round by the men without written characters.

2160. *By the Chairman:* My idea is this—a man may not particularly require any work to be done, but if he can get a good man there he will probably take him and commence his work much sooner than he expected to do; but if doubtful men applied the employer would put the work off until someone came along who impressed him more favourably? Well, speaking of my experience of fifteen years as a sailor, I know of many instances where a man's services are refused if he cannot show a good discharge, but where a man can show "V.G.,"—very good—he is always snapped up.

2161. You approve of that? Yes; I do approve of it.

2162. Can you suggest any scheme by which you could do anything for the floating labour, not necessarily here nor anywhere in particular, during the slack seasons, as, of course, there are always slack times between seasons? Of course, I am a Labour representative, and we have our ideas on this subject. We favour the establishment of a co-operative settlement and co-operative farming.

2163. That is the only suggestion you can make? Well, we think that at such a labour settlement a man should be able to demand food, and that he should work for food. I do not believe in loafing at all, as I have never loafed myself.

2164. What would you do with the men who do not work? I would say, "Here is the breakfast, and here is the work. Do that work, or no breakfast;" and I should treat him accordingly. That is the way I have been brought up. No matter how low these men may be, you can, generally speaking, appeal to some good point about them. They are not always the drunken, besotted wretches you are told about. They have generally got a weak spot somewhere that you can appeal to.

2165. Is there anything more you can tell us that will be useful to us? I think that is all the evidence I can give.

FRANCIS ROBERT BRAND, Storekeeper and Pacific Islander and White Labour Employer, examined:

F. R. Brand. 2166. *By the Chairman:* What are your duties? I engage labour for the sugar plantations.

6 April, 1906. 2167. I suppose you have a fair knowledge of the existing conditions of the labour market? Yes.
2168. Can you tell us something about the labour in Bundaberg at the present time? As regards white labour, at the present time in Bundaberg there are something like from 150 to 200 unemployed. There are three classes in that lot.

2169. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you speak of the unemployed men who travel to the district? I am speaking of the moving unemployed. F. R. Brand.
2170. The floating population? Yes. 6 April, 1906.
2171. *By the Chairman*: You said they are divided into three classes? Yes; there is a class consisting of old men who are not fit for employment; the next class is that of young fellows from the city, who are unsuitable; and the third class consists of men who work only four or five days, and then are out on the streets again.
2172. Those are the men who are not steady workers? Yes.
2173. Then there is a fourth class? Yes; that is the better class. That is the class from which I am wanting labour just now for woodcutting. I am not wanting many, but I could place a few.
2174. Is there any call for men of this class that you cannot supply? Yes.
2175. You can place men of this class? Yes; we wanted ten men yesterday, but I could only supply seven, and we might be wanting twenty next week.
2176. At what wage? 20s. a week and found.
2177. At what sort of work? Cutting and stacking wood.
2178. And you could only get seven men where you wanted ten? Yes.
2179. Did you have many applying for work? Yes.
2180. Did they refuse to work because of the wage? No; they were not suitable. They could not do the work.
2181. A man would have to be a good axeman to do that work? Yes; he would have to be a practical axeman.
2182. And not many are good axemen? No.
2183. Is there any other class of labour required? Yes; dairy hands.
2184. What wage do they get? Those from fourteen to eighteen years of age get from 12s. to 15s. a week and found.
2185. Have you had applications from all you can supply in that class? Yes.
2186. *By Mr. Paget*: What wage did you say you gave for that class of work? From 12s. to 15s. a week. There are any amount of lads who come in to do the work, but they do not understand that class of work.
2187. Are they willing to learn? In some cases they are willing; but in others they work for a week, and then they say they do not like the job, and they go back again.
2188. *By the Chairman*: Could not the men you describe as immature take up that work? They can do it, but they will not do it.
2189. Have you any means of knowing what proportion of the men who come to you are married men? There are a good number of married men, but the greater proportion of them are single men, who come from Brisbane, Sydney, and Rockhampton.
2190. How do they get here? Some get a free pass, and others walk it.
2191. *By Mr. Nielson*: What do you think attracts them to Bundaberg? Do you mean at the present time?
2192. Yes; what attracts them at the present time? They expect to get work now on account of the new conditions under the Bounty Act. The Polynesians are going away, and they know that there will be more room for whites.
2193. Are there many from the southern States that come up here? A good many come from the Richmond River. They are a good class of men, and they get work almost as soon as they get here.
2194. *By Mr. Paget*: Those men generally come here to a job? No.
2195. Do they come seeking work? In some cases the men that come here have got employment to come to, but others come on the lookout for work.
2196. *By the Chairman*: I suppose wages fluctuate in the cutting season; for instance, these men who get 20s. a week for cutting wood in the slack season, what would they get during the crushing season? They would get 25s. a week and rations in the crushing season.
2197. *By Mr. Paget*: Would they be paid a bonus? Yes; 2s. 6d. a week if they stayed throughout the crushing season.
2198. *By the Chairman*: That would be 27s. 6d. a week? Yes.
2199. Have you any idea what is the price of firewood here now, at per cord? It is 4s. 6d. per cord, by contract.
2200. *By Mr. Paget*: What is it by the ton? I cannot say what it would come to by the ton.
2201. It is cut by the ton in other districts? It is cut by the cord here.
2202. *By the Chairman*: Have you any knowledge what a man can cut and stack in a day on a fair block of country? A good man can cut one and a-quarter cords a day. A good practical man can get through that amount.
2203. *By Mr. Paget*: Then it would pay a man better to take firewood cutting by contract than taking so much a week and his rations? It would, if he could cut a cord and a-quarter a day.
2204. *By the Chairman*: Would you let him do it by contract if he were willing to take it that way? No; I think not. Fairymead does not let any work by contract, but prefers paying wages, so that if a man is not worth what he is getting he is got rid of.
2205. *By Mr. Nielson*: You have had a good experience amongst the "boys" here? Yes.
2206. Are there many unemployed kanakas here now? There are about 150.
2207. *By the Chairman*: Are there 150 kanakas unemployed here? Yes.
2208. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have those kanakas much opportunity of getting work in this district just now? Not just now, but in the course of a month or two they will be all employed.
2209. In this district? Yes; but some of them will probably go North in a week or ten days from now.
2210. Will there be plenty of work in the North? Yes, and a number of the "boys" will be taken back to the islands. One of the vessels which is expected to arrive shortly will take away eighty "boys."
2211. Some of the "boys" will be leaving here for the islands then? Yes, about sixty will be taken to the New Hebrides.

- F. R. Brand. 2212. Are those "boys" anxious to leave? Yes, there are a good many anxious to leave if they are in the position to do so.
- 6 April, 1906. 2213. Are some of them not in the position to leave? No. In some cases they do not wish to leave, twenty years, and they have been from eight to twelve months without employment. They signed on again for a small wage, but they have not got any money. Some cancelled their agreements, and they had no money to buy anything, and they do not want to go home.
2215. By Mr. Nielson: When they go home they like to take something with them? Yes, especially those "boys" going to the Solomons.
2216. Do the "boys" not know that they are supposed to go home at the end of this year? No, they do not.
2217. They have not been made acquainted with that fact? They say that the Government have talked for twenty years about the same thing.
2218. And they do not think that the Government are in earnest about it? That is what they think.
2219. Do they understand that when they want to go home their passage will be paid for them? They thoroughly understand that in this district.
2220. Do you think that the average "boy" would object to pay his own passage in this district? Yes, he would.
2221. Do you know of any of the last employers, or of any kanakas who are maintaining these "boys" now? I do not know of any, but the "boys" have been told that if they like to go back to the plantations they will get their food supplied to them.
2222. By Mr. Paget: Is the last employer compelled to maintain the "boys" in town after the expiration of their agreements? No. The inspector tells them that if they care to go back to the plantation there is food for them, but they prefer to stay in town and buy their own food.
2223. By Mr. Nielson: Are there any actual cases where the "boys" are destitute and have not got a shilling? There are one or two cases, and those are the cases of "boys" who are a little stupid and mentally wrong. They get their pay and go and gamble it away.
2224. Do the "boys" from the same island or from the same group assist one another financially? Oh, yes.
2225. Do you know if at the present time there is much opportunity for the "boys" to get work in the North? There is not much opportunity; as I have advices from some of the large mills in the North that they will see what their position is in May, and if there is white labour available then, they will take on white labour, and if there is no white labour they will take on black labour.
2226. By the Chairman: In the meantime they have declared for the bounty? Yes.
2227. In the hope of getting sufficient white labour? Yes; there is one man down from the North now making inquiries.
2228. By Mr. Nielson: Supposing after the 31st December next that the deportation is to take place, can you suggest anything which will facilitate the sending back of these "boys" to their respective groups? I might tell you that there are a number of the "boys" who will not go home.
2229. How many "boys" are there altogether? About 4,000 or 5,000.
2230. How many can a steamer take at once? The steamer can carry from 300 to 500.
2231. They could not take them all away at once? No.
2232. Can you suggest what to do with the "boys" after the 31st of December until they get an opportunity of going home? No; unless they can be employed by their last employer until the time the vessel is ready to take them to their new land.

JOHN CARTER, Manager of Bonna Plantation, examined:

- J. Carter. 2233. By the Chairman: Have you had many years' experience of the sugar industry? I did not come particularly to answer questions but to refer to the evidence of two witnesses as it appeared in the paper this morning. They seem to have singled out Bonna for a great deal of fault-finding.
- 6 April, 1906. 2234. Frederick Courtice is reported to have said: "At Bonna the men work eleven hours per day, and if it is wet and they work less than a quarter of a day, no pay is given to them for that day. The food at Bonna is better than at many of the other plantations." Further on he said: "At Bonna Plantation, Buss Brothers, the men work eleven hours a day with one meal hour, for 8s. a day and food. In wet weather they get no pay for less than a quarter of a day."—What have you to say to those statements? This morning I brought the men to the office to read the paper, and they said the accusations that were made were deliberately false. Six of the men signed this letter:—

Bundaberg, Bonna, 6th March, 1906.

SIR,—Seeing in Wednesday's report of the Commission a witness said, "He had heard at one plantation the men not only had their wages stopped for wet, but were charged for their rations as well." Now, sir, kindly allow us to give our version of the affair.—

A number of employees were suspended in February on account of the wet weather, and some of us, not wishing to be put to the expense of having to pay for our board in town, asked the manager if we could pay for our board and lodging here until there was work for us. This the manager kindly agreed to do, and his action, for our financial benefit, has been greatly misconstrued, and we take this, our first opportunity, of placing the true facts of the matter before you and the public, nor do we know of any employee here having had to pay for his rations while not working on account of wet weather.

We are yours faithfully,

M. King,	W. Gaheen,
J. Page,	Jas. Gilbert,
Frank Jones,	E. Keyworth.

2235. How long have those men been in your employment? From six to twelve months. There were seven men connected with it, but one of them refused to sign the letter. He said the letter was quite

true, but he did not see why he should sign it. I asked him if it was true or if it was false, and he said, "The letter is true enough, but I would rather not sign it." Then the ganger also wrote this letter—

J. Carter.

6 April, 1906.

Bonna, 6 April, 1906.

SIR,—In a witness's evidence on Wednesday, he said, "At Bonna, . . . if it was wet and the men worked less than a quarter of a day they received no pay," and later, "At Bonna the men were not paid if it turned wet, though they had worked a quarter of a day and were charged for their rations." Now, sir, as ganger, allow me to give this my most emphatic denial. After I was put in charge of the gang the manager distinctly told me that if the men only turned out and were unable to work through wet, and had to return to the barracks, they were each to receive a quarter of a day's pay.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

F. CONSTANT, Ganger.

2236. That is the practice which you pursue with regard to wet days? Yes; I was really taken aback. It was only last night and this morning that these statements have come to my knowledge, and I took the first opportunity of coming in and correcting them.

2237. That puts a different complexion on the matter altogether—Now that you are here, is there any evidence you can give to help us? Of course, I did not come prepared with figures; but if you ask me some questions I may be able to answer them.

2238. Do you employ white or black labour? Both.

2239. Do you anticipate any difficulty in replacing the kanaka labour which you will have to disengage with on 31st December? I do not think so. During the year I have had as many as sixty white men employed.

2240. How many acres have you got under cultivation? About 450 acres.

2241. Do you employ any white men in cultivating that land? Yes.

2242. What wages do you pay them? Chipppers I pay 18s. a week; ploughmen, £1 a week; and head ploughmen from 22s. 6d. up to 25s. a week, and found.

2243. Have you any difficulty in getting men at those rates? Not a bit.

2244. Do you consider those are rates which the industry can afford to pay? I have been growing sugar for a number of years, and I really have not made it pay. I have had droughts and floods to contend with, and I certainly have not made money myself.

2245. Given fair average seasons, could you pay those wages? I think so.

2246. With or without the bonus? I do not think so without the bonus.

2247. How much of the estate is registered for the bonus? About 300 acres. I have been working white labour since the original time for registration four years ago.

2248. Supposing the bonus were withdrawn, could you still conduct the industry profitably? I hardly think so.

2249. Then your ability to pay the wages you mentioned is more or less dependent on your being able to get the bonus? Yes, and of course we have to depend upon the seasons. If the seasons are good, and your workmen's work is successful, I dare say you could afford to pay good men better wages; but with the seasons we have been having I have been going backward year by year.

2250. By Mr. Nelson: How do you find the average white man compares as a field labourer with the kanaka? In a gang of sixty men you cannot expect them to be all first class. Neither do you expect a gang of sixty kanakas to be all first class. I have found really good honest men as chipppers and workers generally. I have no fault to find, and I am not one bit frightened about not being able to carry on with white labour.

2251. By the Chairman: For white labour you are dependent, to a great extent, upon a floating supply? Yes.

2252. Would it not be better to have a larger supply of labour settled in the district? I really think it would. At present I am drawing a good deal of labour from settlers.

2253. Then it would be advantageous to increase the number of those settlers if you could? Yes.

2254. How can that be done? I noticed in the evidence some talk about settling men on 10-acre blocks. Unless the land was very good, I really do not see how a man with a family could make a living on that area.

2255. He would be making his living out of you by giving you his labour? Yes, but on a sugar plantation there may be four, five, or six months when you could do without that man.

2256. Then he would need to have some reserves on his own farm? Yes. If his 10 acres were good land, he could make a living.

2257. Supposing it was inferior land, what area would he need? He would want to go in for cattle. If it was poor land, a larger area would be more useless, as he would have to keep it in order. There is land between here and Bonna, and if a man owned 2,000 acres of it, he could not make a living on it.

2258. Would it not feed cattle? Yes, with a large area.

2259. Would it not carry a beast to 20 acres, or something like that? Yes; but when you enclose a small place like 100 acres, the carrying capacity is not so great as if cattle can roam generally over it.

2260. Not unless it is ringbarked? No.

2261. By Mr. Paget: Is it country that would keep a man if it was brushed and ringbarked? I do not think it would be worth it, although I have been told that in California land much worse than this has been made capable of intense cultivation through irrigation.

2262. Is the country you speak of ridgy or flat? Flat country, tending to be white sandy.

2263. By the Chairman: We have been told you can get water within 20 feet of the surface anywhere there. Is that so? I believe so.

2264. Supposing it was cut up into 160-acre blocks, could a man do anything with it? I think so, provided he was sure of getting work for six or eight months in the year on the sugar estates.

2265. Well, a good man would get that? He would be always sure of getting that.

2266. Then you think that in 160-acre blocks a good man could do something with it? Yes.

- J. Carter.
6 April, 1906.
2267. But no smaller area would be of any use? I do not think so, except, of course, he was in the way of getting constant work, and then a smaller area would allow him to keep a cow or two, and he could go home on a Saturday night.
2268. Of course in a situation like that he would have to be away all week; it would be too far from his work. What would be the nearest property to that land? Bonna Plantation is the only sugar estate there. Of course there is Bingera on the opposite side of the river, and it is not much further.
2269. But the river would be a bar? Yes.
2270. Are there any estates between the town and the land where men settled there could get employment? No.
2271. When you can no longer employ Pacific Islanders, how many hands will you want, on the average, in the year? I dare say for the whole year I shall want 100 men.
2272. By Mr. Paget: If those lands you speak of were cut up into 100 10-acre blocks, do you think it would be a solution of the labour difficulty in the future? Yes.
2273. That would settle 100 families—Do you think that that land would be quite enough for men to make a living on for two or three months when they were not employed on the plantation? Yes, I certainly think it would.
2274. I speak of good land? I certainly think it would be enough to keep those 100 men in fairly constant employment during the year.
2275. We are presuming that that is a reason for trying to settle men in homes of their own if there is employment in the district otherwise, but not necessarily employment for every day in the year? I think that would solve a lot of the trouble, but if you cut up the Woongarra Scrub and place 100 men there you would be taking away a big area of land from the men who are now finding employment.
2276. But if it was cut up into 100 10-acre blocks and these men settled there, they might grow cane for themselves, and they might go in for fowls and grow potatoes and that sort of thing, and not take the land away from cultivation altogether? I certainly think it is a very good idea. I read where one of the central mills was going to carry out that idea up North, where they have an unlimited supply of land.
2277. We really have not got an unlimited supply as a matter of fact? I thought you had.
2278. The scheme you refer to was a scheme that was to be tried on the Johnstone River, but it did not mature? I thought it did.
2279. By Mr. Nielson: There is a good deal of land suitable for agriculture between here and Bonna that is private land? Yes.
2280. By the Chairman: But the price asked for those lands would be much beyond the reach of the small men? Yes, in large areas.
2281. You know the district pretty well? Yes.
2282. All the decent agricultural land in this district is selected, is it not? Yes.
- 2282A. It has all been taken up? Yes.

JAMES MATTHEWSON, Excise Officer, examined:

- James Matthewson.
6 April, 1906.
2283. By the Chairman: Where do you reside? In Bundaberg.
2284. What do you wish to tell us? What I wish to speak about is the present contract system, or rather the harvesting of the cane crop.
2285. What is your occupation? During the crushing season I am attached to the Excise Department under the Bounty Act. I consider that a contract, instead of being let to a single individual, should be let to the gang who actually do the work, and then let them all share and share alike.
2286. By Mr. Paget: What is the system in vogue here now? Either day labour or it is let to one man.
2287. Co-operative gangs do not take contracts here? Not as a whole, but the most successful contractors so far as the supply of labour is concerned are those in the Gin Gin district, where the gang system is largely co-operative.
2288. By Mr. Nielson: There is nothing to prevent a gang of men from doing the same thing here? They have asked to do it, but they have been repeatedly refused. One man told me that a planter told him he would not let a gang cut by contract, but he would let a contract to one man.
2289. By the Chairman: He wants one man to deal with, or if there is a gang they must appoint a spokesman who can deal with the employer? Yes, that would do.
2290. By Mr. Nielson: The Hindoos share and share alike, and appoint one man as spokesman to act for the lot while they all work in gangs? Yes.
2291. By the Chairman: There is nothing to prevent that system being adopted? They have not done it so far. Where they work in gangs in other districts they have been exceptionally well satisfied with the amount of work done and the amount of money received.
2292. This system is in vogue in other parts of the State where the gangs share and share alike and appoint a spokesman? It is not done in this district, but it would be far better if it were so.
2293. That is a matter we cannot deal with, and the men will have to take it up themselves? They should do it.
2294. By Mr. Paget: Even the cook shares and shares alike with the others? Yes; but not in this district. I would like to point out that the place where there was the least trouble with labour last season was where this system was adopted, in the Gin Gin district. About fifty or sixty farmers supplied cane to the Gin Gin Central Mill. They are all small men, owning from 30 to 100 acres. They certainly pay the best wages, and they keep their men better than at the majority of places.
2295. By the Chairman: You can advocate that, and it is for the men to take it up themselves, but there is no one that can step in and enforce it? Oh, you cannot enforce it. I would like to say that I do not think there is the slightest risk of there being a shortage in the labour supply, provided the conditions are fair and reasonable. It is the small men who pay the highest wages—namely, 25s. a week and well found.
2296. You should see the members of the Sugar-workers' Union and get them to take the matter up themselves as it appears to be a good thing? Yes, it is a good thing. The small men pay the highest wages, and they are a good, sound, substantial portion of the community.
2297. Is there any other matter you wish to touch upon? No.

(Childers.)

SATURDAY, 7 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

Mr. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) |

Mr. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

OSCAR EUGENE POWER, Clerk of Petty Sessions and Inspector of Pacific Islanders, examined:

2298. *By the Chairman*: Can you tell us the number of Pacific Islanders now in this district? I can O. E. Power. only do so approximately.

2299. How is your district defined? It embraces the whole of what is known as the Isis Scrub, including 7 April, 1906.

2300. Is the number of islanders diminishing here? Yes.

2301. Have you any return showing the number of islanders here during the last three or four years? Yes. On 1st January, 1904, the number, including "boys" under agreement, "boys" whose agreements had expired, what they call "walk-about boys," and exemption "boys," was 566; on 1st January, 1905, the number was 522; and on 1st January last, 392; and at the present time, 230.

2302. Is there anything in connection with the condition of the islanders here that you wish to tell us? Yes. I daresay there are fully fifty "boys," whose agreements have expired, who are now walking about the place, and some of them are really destitute.

2303. Can they not obtain re-engagements? No. The registration for the bonus precludes them from being employed.

2304. Then they are not likely to get employment? Some of them will, but I do not think that all of them will, and it will be some time, perhaps, before they get work, and until then they will be in a bad way.

2305. *By Mr. Paget*: Do those islanders not wish to return home? They would like to return, but there is no boat going to their islands.

2306. *By the Chairman*: What are they? Chiefly New Hebrides "boys," mostly from Api.

2307. I suppose Mr. Caulfeild is acquainted with the fact? I do not know whether he knows of it or not.

2308. Do you not supply him with information of that sort? Yes, when "boys" want to go home I advise him. The shipping people were down here some time ago, and they thought they would be likely to have a boat going to the New Hebrides, but they found afterwards they could not arrange it.

2309. *By Mr. Paget*: The "Sydney Belle" arrived yesterday—Would it not be advisable to take some steps if she is going to the New Hebrides? I always get an advice as to where a boat is going; and, if she is going to the Solomons, I advise the Solomon "boys."

2310. *By Mr. Nielson*: Were these "boys" last employed in this district? A number of them came from other districts—principally from Bundaberg.

2311. Have you a record of their last employer? Not unless in the case of those who were employed in this district.

2312. Are the last employers of kanakas in the district generally aware that they are responsible for their return passage? I think most of them are, because, as a rule, they do not like it.

2313. *By the Chairman*: You might let it be generally known that they are? I have made it as widely known as I can.

2314. *By Mr. Nielson*: When "boys" come to you and tell you that they want to go home, do you not notify the last employer that he has to furnish the additional money required? Yes.

2315. *By the Chairman*: Do they comply with it? Some of them do; but in some cases it is a matter of the "boys" having broken their agreements or of their agreements having expired.

2316. Is the extra amount of £2 paid then? Yes.

2317. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is it paid to you or to the "boy"? It is paid to me.

2318. Do you hold many excess payments? I remit them all to Brisbane.

2319. *By the Chairman*: Do you correspond direct with Brisbane or through Mr. Caulfeild? Direct with Brisbane. I have no connection with Mr. Caulfeild. This is a separate district.

2320. Has Mr. Brennan been advised of these fifty men who are walking about? I do not know whether he knows the exact number, but he knows that there are a number of them, because I wrote asking him what to do with them.

2321. You also control the Labour Bureau? Yes.

2322. Do you find the bureau is much used here? It is very little used indeed.

2323. Do labourers register with any freedom? No; I have seen very few of them. The police have the distribution of relief, which interests these people most, and they go to the police. They do not come to me to register their names for employment. I have had very few applicants seeking employment. I usually advise them to go out amongst the farmers and make personal application. Sometimes I inquire here of farmers who want labour.

2324. Do you keep a register? I have the books, but I really have no use for them.

2325. In that case, there are no applications made to you to find employment? No.

2326. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do the farmers not apply to you when they want a man? I have had one application.

2327. *By the Chairman*: Do you not think it would be better if the relief was in your hands, and then the men would apply to you? I do not think so. The police have better opportunities of knowing the men and of making inquiries.

2328. But, with the object of making the bureau a live thing, would it not be an inducement to men to register their names if they had to apply to you for relief? I daresay it would.

2329. *By Mr. Paget*: Are there many Pacific Islanders in this district settled on the land? Yes; there are fifteen.

2330. *By the Chairman*: In the return which you are preparing for the Commission will you kindly give all the particulars about those men—whether they are married, the nature of their tenure, whether you

O. E. Power. have any control over that tenure as Inspector of Pacific Islanders, and as to whether you have been consulted? As a rule I witness all leases or agreements.

7 April, 1906. 2331. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is there a depôt here for men to camp in? No.
2332. Do you think the establishment of a depôt would be an assistance to the Labour Bureau? I think it would.

2333. *By the Chairman*: Have you any idea of the supply of white labour at present? There is a great number of unemployed going about. There must be between 250 and 300 men in the Childers district.
2334. Have you heard of any of those men being offered work and refusing it? No; but I have an idea that some of them are not looking very much for work, but I know nothing definite about that.

THOMAS SWANTON, Farmer, examined:

T. Swanton. 2335. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A farmer. I was at one time a recruiter in the Islands.

7 April, 1906. 2336. What is the area of your property? Ninety-seven acres.

2337. What area have you under cultivation? Sixty-two acres.

2338. I presume you are growing cane? Yes.

2339. How much did you cut last year? Forty acres.

2340. Did you cut it by white labour? No; by black labour last year.

2341. Are you now registered for the bonus? Yes.

2342. Did you estimate what it cost you to cut it by black labour last year? It took about 1s. 9d. per ton to cut and load it.

2343. *By Mr. Paget*: What was the return per acre? About 16 tons.

2344. That was the average? Yes; an average of 16 tons.

2345. You are now employing white labour altogether? Yes.

2346. How many men do you employ? I have my own two sons at present.

2347. What wages do you pay them for ordinary work? I pay one son 25s. a week and the other £1 a week at present.

2348. The difference is on account of their age? Yes; on account of their age.

2349. And you provide them with food? Yes; with food also.

2350. What do you anticipate you will have to pay men to cut cane? If I went outside my own family I would have to pay 3s. 6d. a ton at least, at the rate they are asking for cutting and loading.

2351. You have had a good deal of experience in that work yourself? Yes.

2352. What can a man cut and load a day from a 20-ton per acre crop? A man might easily cut the cane for 3s. a ton and load it.

2353. *By Mr. Paget*: What wages would he earn per day at 3s. per ton? He should be able to cut from 2½ to 3 tons a day.

2354. That would be 7s. 6d. to 9s. per day that he would be able to earn? Yes.

2355. And find himself? Yes.

2356. *By the Chairman*: Do you anticipate any difficulty in getting white labour next season? Yes.

2357. You heard Mr. Power say that there are many men knocking about? Yes.

2358. In spite of what Mr. Power says you think there will be some difficulty in getting sufficient labour? Yes. In spite of what he says I think we shall be very much hampered for labour this year.

2359. You are at Cordalba? Yes.

2360. Can you suggest any remedy by which your difficulties can be met? It is beyond my power to suggest any remedy.

2361. Do you get assistance in your work from amongst the people resident here? I have always worked with black labour successfully, and never with white labour.

2362. You have no experience of white labour then? No.

2363. Are there any people about here who are at times willing to work for other farmers? Yes; and they are most reasonable to the young farmers settled here.

2364. And no doubt they are good men? Yes; they are very good men.

2365. The trouble would be that you would not have enough of these men? No; there are not enough of them.

2366. You would be in favour of settling men on the land here? Yes; if it could be done.

2367. As a matter of fact there is no land to be subdivided here? No; there is no land to be subdivided.

2368. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you tell us the average areas of the holdings in this district; are there any large holdings, or are the farms of reasonable areas, say up to 160 acres? There are just two large farms, and the others are reasonable farms.

2369. *By Mr. Nielson*: Who have the large farms? Young Bros. have one, and the other is Knockroe, but I forget the area of them.

2370. And the others, what are they? They are reasonable farms.

2371. Of how much acreage? 160 acres.

2372. *By Mr. Nielson*: Good land? Yes; good land; that is what I call the reasonable farms.

2373. *By the Chairman*: What would you call a minimum acre? If every man was handicapped with twelve children like I am he could not do with less than 80 acres of land.

2374. *By Mr. Paget*: It is not always supposed to be a handicap to have children; it is supposed to be a blessing? But I have twelve.

2375. *By the Chairman*: You are doubly blessed? Yes.

2376. *By Mr. Nielson*: You will be able to supply all your own labour from your own family? Perhaps.

2377. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything more that you can tell us? Yes, what I came here to speak about was this: I am very much in sympathy with the "boys" who do not wish to go home, but are compelled to return to their islands. I was engaged in the recruiting trade for Messrs. Buss and Williams, and I can tell you that on one occasion when we went to the islands I saw no less than three kanakas murdered by the islanders as soon as we landed them. We had just hauled them on the beach when the others came up and murdered them, and at the risk of my own life I secured their bodies and brought them into our boat, and buried them at sea.

2378. You served as a recruiter? Yes, and I say that it is an outrageous law that sends a "boy" to his island.

2379. Even to his own island? Yes, even to his own island, as he is sure to be murdered.

2380. Would it not be safe to land a "boy" at his own "passage"? No, he would not be safe at all. I saw those three kanakas landed at their own "passage," and they were murdered straight away.

2381. Where was that? That was at the island of Tongoa, in the New Hebrides. We landed those three in the evening, and on the following day we landed another "boy" at his own "passage" on his island, and he did not know a single soul there. I had him for an hour in the boat, but I was forced to land him. The consequence was that as soon as he was landed on the beach his boxes were kicked open by the others, and his things taken out. I consider that the law is a very outrageous one which sends a "boy" back to his island to be murdered. As a general rule, the natives only supply their wants for to-day. They never provide for to-morrow, and if you send back these "boys" they will starve.

2382. You think they should be sent back in batches, and time given for them to be absorbed in the population of the island? Yes; I think time should be given.

2383. How long is it since you had experience as a recruiter? It is twenty years since I was recruiting. I was employed by Messrs. Buss and Williams.

2384. I do not suppose that the islands are so savage now as they were in those days? I do not think they are altered one bit. Most of the "boys" in Queensland come from the back-country tribes, and they have to pass through the beach tribes when they land before they can get into the bush.

2385. You think there is a risk when they are going through the beach tribes? Yes; and I think it is outrageous to send them back.

2386. *By Mr. Nielson:* What about the "boys" who want to go back? I do not think they should be allowed to go back. I have known cases where "boys" wanted to go back, and when they got to their island they could not find their particular "passage," and we had to bring them back to Bundaberg, and they were re-engaged. Some of the "boys" have done that for the third time.

2387. Those cases would be very few? Well, in the case of "boys" who have been in Queensland for thirty years, they cannot find their own "passages" when they go back to the islands.

2388. I suppose there are other places in the South Seas Islands where the white settlers want to engage "boys" to work, so do you not think that the "boys" would be just as well off there? Will you kindly name those places, sir?

2389. *By the Chairman:* Well, at Sandwich Island, in the New Hebrides? I do not know.

2390. *By Mr. Nielson:* There are hundreds of French farmers settled there? But you can have no idea how the Frenchmen treat the natives there.

2391. We are told that the Frenchmen treat them very well? Well, on one occasion I saw the harbour-master at New Caledonia pick up a stretcher and split open a "boy's" head with it. I have known the Frenchmen tie other "boys" to trees and let the mosquitoes eat them.

2392. *By the Chairman:* We are told that, although there were outrages of that kind at one time, the conditions are much improved now, and we have been told that on the reliable authority of people who have been there quite recently? It was not so when I was there.

2393. What you approve of is that, in the event of a "boy" not being able to find his own "passage," the Government agent should take that "boy" and have him in the care of a Resident Commissioner of the group? I think that would be the most reasonable thing to do.

2394. Would you approve of that being done? I would. I would approve of anything that would prevent murder of the sort that I have seen.

2395. *By Mr. Nielson:* Why were those "boys" murdered? They landed at a "passage" that they thought was their own, and they had boxes with them.

2396. *By the Chairman:* Do you not think that they might have been guilty of some breach of their tribal laws, and that that was their punishment? No. There were two "boys," and the wife of one of them and a pickaninny, and they were all killed but the pickaninny.

2397. They were not killed for some suspicion of sorcery? No.

2398. It was purely for plunder—for their boxes? Yes; and probably they intended to have a cannibal feast.

JOHN WILLIAM CLAYTON, Cane Farmer, examined:

2399. *By the Chairman:* Where is your farm? I have a farm at Cordalba, and I conduct it in connection with my family.

2400. What is the area of your family farm? 110 acres.

2401. How much of that is under cultivation? About 100 acres.

2402. What is the crop? The majority of it is under cane, and some under general farming.

2403. How much cane was cut last year? 63 or 64 acres.

2404. What labour do you employ? Since the Bounty Act has come into force we have employed white labour.

2405. Did you employ white labour last year? Yes.

2406. How did you engage men last year? By day labour.

2407. What wages did you pay? 7s. a day, and they found themselves in rations, but they had a house and firewood found for them.

2408. Were they neighbours of yours or strangers to the district? Strangers.

2409. Do you know what was the average tonnage taken off those 63 acres? About 16 or 17 tons, as near as I can remember.

2410. You have done a good deal of canecutting yourself? Yes.

2411. What should a man be able to cut and load a day? From 2 to 2½ or 3 tons a day, and some men would cut more than 3 tons.

2412. You think a fair average would be from 2½ to 3 tons? Yes.

2413. Were you satisfied with the wage you paid as being a proper wage? No, not for the labour we had last year.

2414. You think the men you had last year were not worth that money? No, they were not worth it generally speaking.

2415. What would you consider a fair average price for cutting? I think 6s. a day to a good man who cuts and loads 2½ tons a day.

2416. And he finds himself? Yes, he finds himself in rations, but we find him quarters to live in.

2417. Where would he get rations—Is there a store there? Yes.

T. Swanton.

7 April, 1906.

J. W.

Clayton.

7 April, 1906.

- J. W. Clayton.
7 April, 1906.
2418. Are you employing any labour now? Not outside the family.
2419. Have you employed any labour since the crushing season? No.
2420. What would you think a fair wage outside the crushing season? In the slack season I would give a man £1 a week and find him, if he is a good hand.
2421. That is all the year round except the crushing season? Yes.
2422. Have you any experience of cutting cane by contract? Not by white labour.
2423. Have you any suggestions to make that you think will be useful to us? I do not know.
2424. Do you think there will be a shortage of labour? I think there will be.
2425. Can you suggest anything by which that shortage will be met? The labour that comes about here prior to crushing is unsuitable for harvesting operations. Last year a man came to me and said he was an experienced cane-cutter, and that he had been cutting cane up North and also in the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales.
2426. How did he shape? He shaped very badly.
2427. The question comes to this: if you give good wages you will get a good man? I gave 7s. a day, which I consider good wages, but I did not get good men.
2428. You did not have the good fortune to get good men? No.
2429. You think 7s. a day should attract good men? Yes, because at that wage they get more than I do out of it.
2430. *By Mr. Paget:* How many hours a week do wages men work? From nine to nine and a-half hours a day; but in the winter time the hours are not so long.
2431. But what is the average, taking the short days with the long? Nine to nine and a-half hours a day.
2432. *By the Chairman:* And what time do they knock off on Saturday? They knock off at 4 o'clock on Saturday. In harvest time they also knock off in the morning for something to eat.
2433. *By Mr. Nielson:* Some of the farmers had good men here last year? I dare say some of them had, as there are good men in the district.
2434. *By the Chairman:* Can you suggest any means by which good men might be encouraged to stop here and supply you with good labour all the year round? If a system of harvesters' homes were started, giving every man 10 acres to grow sugar-cane, it would take a man the greater part of his time looking after those 10 acres.
2435. *By Mr. Nielson:* Supposing you made it 5 acres? If he grew cane, he would be wanted on his own place the greater part of the time when he was required elsewhere.
2436. *By Mr. Paget:* It was not suggested that these areas should be given to men for the purpose of growing cane, but more for the purpose of giving them homes where they could go whilst work was slack, and not have any rent to pay, and where they could grow some vegetables, and keep some fowls, and so on, to help the thing along? They would not know where to dispose of their vegetables—most of the farmers grow their own.
2437. They could dispose of a lot of them amongst their own families? Of course, they could do that.
2438. *By the Chairman:* Do you know the Knockroe Estate? Yes.
2439. How much land is there in it? There is a quantity of grass land.
2440. Can you give the area approximately? There are probably 2,000 acres in it.
2441. How much of it is cane land? There is a good area.
2442. Do you know Messrs. Young Brothers' plantation? Yes.
2443. How much land have they got? They have two estates in this district—Hapsburg and Lynwood.
2444. What is the area of the two approximately? I could not tell you.

WILLIAM THOMAS HORSWILL JOB, Cane Farmer, examined:

- W. T. H. Job.
7 April, 1906.
2445. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane grower.
2446. Where is your farm? In the Horton district.
2447. What area have you altogether? 200 acres.
2448. How much under cane? 150 acres.
2449. How much did you cut last year? About 130 acres.
2450. Did you use white or black labour? White.
2451. Did you cut by contract or by day labour? By contract.
2452. What did you pay for it? Various prices; but the average was about 3s. 6d. a ton. I sent cane to two mills—the one mill has tramlines and the other loads into drays.
2453. There is a difference between loading into trams and loading into drays? With good cane it makes a difference of from 6d. to 9d.
2454. What tonnage did you cut? An average of 20 tons to the acre.
2455. Have you any idea what wages the men made? A private gang I had made nearly 8s. a day. The rest of the cane was cut by the Colonial Sugar Refining gang, and I could not tell you what they made.
2456. Did you ever hear what they made? No; they do not keep it separate, but I believe they averaged between 7s. and 8s. a day.
2457. What quantity would a man be able to cut and load with a 20-ton crop? With one loading a man ought to be able to do 3½ tons a day. We have often had men cut as much as 4 and 5 tons a day.
2458. Are you registered for the bonus? Yes.
2459. What do you pay for ordinary field labourers all the year round? This year 18s. a week and keep for chipping men—that is for the best men—and £1 a week for the ploughmen.
2460. Do you sometimes get a man to whom you pay less than 18s. a week? Yes.
2461. Would that be a man who was sick? There are many men in the place who are not capable of full work. They may not be ill, but we get to know the men and what they can do. We put on five or six men, and one of them may be rows behind the others, and we cannot give him the same wages.
2462. He will be a weakly man or old? Yes, a weakly man.
2463. What do you give in such cases? 15s. or 16s. a week. But lately we have not been employing them at all. I have been weeding them out on account of this wage.
2464. We have been told that 20s. is about a fair thing for chipping for a good man? Some men will be worth 20s., and some will only be worth 10s. on the same work.

2465. Do you expect any difficulty in getting white labour during the coming season? I think it will be a hard job to get enough good men this year.

2466. Are the same men likely to come back to you this year—Were they local men? No; they came from different parts of Queensland. My gang told me they would come back; but, although they earned good money, they went away leaving everyone in debt, and I am afraid they will not come back.

HERBERT EPPS, Farmer, examined:

2467. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your holding? 135 acres.

2468. How much have you under cane? 95 acres.

2469. How much did you cut last year? About 58 acres.

2470. Did you employ white or black labour? White.

2471. What tonnage did you get? 800 tons.

2472. Was it cut by contract or by day labour? By contract.

2473. What did you pay per ton? The average cost was 4s. 2d. per ton. Of course that was for cutting and loading. It made no provision for carting.

2474. Cutting and loading into the trucks? Partly. I used portable trams. It made no provision for hauling.

2475. *By Mr. Paget:* Were the men working co-operatively? No; they were in the employ of a contractor.

2476. *By the Chairman:* Do you know what wages they made? 6s. 6d. a day and 2s. 6d. a week bonus for those who remained during the whole season—five meals a day.

2477. What do you pay for field work? Wages differ very much. The wages I paid this year ranged from 15s. to £1 a week for chipping. In one case I paid 22s. 6d. a week.

2478. Do you think there will be any difficulty in getting labour this year? I think there will be great difficulty.

2479. Can you suggest any means by which a flow of labour can be directed to the district? At the present moment I cannot; but I should imagine some steps will be taken with a view to introducing labour either from the Southern States or from other countries.

2480. Are there any farmers' associations here? Yes.

2481. Are you not combining to take action? Hitherto nothing has been done.

2482. Do you not think that, in anticipation of the coming season, something should be done? Yes. Representations have been made with a view to getting Parliament to take up the matter.

2483. Don't talk about Parliament—God helps those who help themselves? Nothing has been done so far. The difficulty is to know what to do.

2484. Do you not think the various associations should take the matter in hand? It is very difficult to offer suggestions as to the direction in which they should act.

2485. But surely men who know the business thoroughly should have some suggestions to offer? They understand their own business, but they do not understand the conditions elsewhere. They do not know where to look for labour.

2486. You know there is a Labour Bureau here? Yes. I was rather astonished to hear Mr. Power state that it was not made use of. It may not have been in his time, but in his predecessor's time it was made great use of. I say that with authority.

2487. Do you think that a well-organised bureau would be availed of to a great extent? I think it would be very useful. The men who were really looking for work would register. Our difficulty is to discriminate between men who are looking for work and men who do not want work at all.

2488. *By Mr. Paget:* It has been suggested to the Commission that a system of certificates should be introduced—the same as in connection with the pastoral industry, where a man can practically take his discharge and show it to his next employer? The difficulty I see about that is that one is so loath to give any certificate other than a favourable one. If a man is a good worker, but a drunkard, you say in his certificate that he is a good workman, and say nothing about his being a drunkard. I do not think that system practicable.

2489. *By the Chairman:* Are you aware that such a system is in operation in connection with the Pastoralists' Association? I am aware of that; but in the pastoral industry the supply of labour is greater than the demand. Our difficulty is that we are compelled to take men whom we know to be unfit when we take them on, because we have entered into a contract to deliver so much cane, and we must deliver it within a limited time; so that, whatever class of labour offers itself, you are bound to take. That is indicated by the immense number of men who pass through the gangs in the course of a crushing, in order that we may keep our gangs at their full strength. In my case the contractor had a gang of nine men, and, to keep it at its full strength, he had something like sixty or seventy men pass through his hands. You do not know when a man starts in the morning whether he is a good man or not, and you are bound to keep him a certain time.

2490. *By Mr. Nielson:* Supposing there was a properly organised Labour Bureau, do you think the farmers in the district would combine to avail themselves of its services? I think they most certainly would within the limits of their abilities.

2491. You can quite understand that a bureau cannot do much good unless there is co-operation with the employers as well as with the workers? The farmers would be only too glad to co-operate. If I want a man, I come into town and look about the streets, but it is a most invidious thing to go and ask a man if he is looking for work. If I could go to the bureau, I should be only too glad to avail myself of its assistance.

2492. *By the Chairman:* Is there any hesitation on the part of the men in registering with the bureau—it costs them nothing? Unfortunately, there seems to be an undue proportion of elderly men here who are not fit for our purposes.

2493. But they would register their ages, and you could refuse to take them except at a reduced wage? If a man was looking for work, he would register, and many used to register themselves.

2494. *By Mr. Paget:* In view of the fact that some 5,000 or 6,000 islanders have to be deported at the end of this year, thus leaving a gap in the labour available for the sugar industry, do you not think it is the duty of the farmers' associations and employers generally to see how they can get labour? There is no question about its being desirable that they should do so, but I cannot help feeling that those who are responsible for the gap in the labour should also be responsible for filling it up.

H. Epps.

7 April, 1906.

H. Epps. 2495. *By Mr. Nielson*: The situation is there, and you—the same as everybody else in the State—have to grapple with it—There is no use arguing what the situation ought to have been; the question is to face the situation that presents itself to us? We shall be compelled to do so in self-defence, but our capacity is limited, and we are face to face with the fact that we have been expending what capital we brought into the business, and that we have been making nothing out of it. We are making less than the poorest of our employees.

7 April, 1906. 2496. Can you suggest how you can help yourselves, or how either the Federal or the State Government can assist you to grapple with the situation? I have no suggestion except that I consider that the Federal Government, or those who are responsible for the situation, should introduce labour into the sugar districts.

2497. *By Mr. Paget*: That is, provided there is not sufficient labour in the Commonwealth to fill the gap? Yes; but in the interim we are suffering.

2498. *By Mr. Nielson*: Can you say where that labour can be procured? I have no knowledge. I would like to say that the price the farmer receives for his cane is regulated by climatic conditions. That is to say, he incurs the expense of dealing with the cane before he knows whether there will be any crop; and that regulates the question of standard wages. It is all very well to say that a crop of 20 tons or 30 tons will pay a certain rate of wages; but the average here for the last four years has been very low. In 1902 it was 6 tons to the acre; in 1903 it was 8 tons. I would like to say that the figures given by the Inspector of Pacific Islanders do not quite indicate the extent to which we avail ourselves of the bureau. All we growers here, with the exception of one or two of the larger growers, are practically running our business on white labour lines. Further than that, one witness gave you an erroneous impression regarding the average size of the holdings here. The average is 42 acres.

2499. *By the Chairman*: You have made the calculation? Yes. The district is peculiarly suited to the establishment of white labour, because the areas are relatively so small. We have only two large estates—one of 800 to 1,000 acres—Knockroe, and Hapsburg and Lynwood have an area of about 1,800 acres.

2500. What is the total area of Knockroe? About 2,000 acres.

2501. What is done with the balance? It is grass land.

2502. They use it for paddocking? They feed cows, pigs, and horses.

2503. The Hapsburg and Lynwood property is pretty well all under cane? Yes.

2504. *By Mr. Paget*: There are about 1,500 acres belonging to Messrs. Young Brothers on those estates registered for white labour? That is so. But, owing to the areas of the holdings being so small and the families so large, we have no land that could be utilised for the establishment of harvesters' homes.

2505. They would not be quite so necessary in such a district owing to the family conditions? Quite so. Last year the district employed of outside labour some 500 hands during the crushing season.

2506. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many hands do you think will be required during the next crushing season? Approximately, 800.

2507. That will be including the men working here during the slack season? I think the number required in harvesting the next crop will be about 800.

2508. You do not mean that number over and above the number now working? No.

2509. *By the Chairman*: Are there many unemployed about here just now? I do not think there are any who desire to be employed. There are a number.

2510. Mr. Power told us that he thinks there are from 250 to 300? Well, my observations do not bear that out. The class of labour we have been getting so far has militated very much against the quality of the cultivation. We are practically doing nothing. Very little trashing is being done, and very little else.

2511. *By the Chairman*: Why? The uncertainty of the future.

2512. Not because of the scarcity of labour? Certainly not.

2513. *By Mr. Nielson*: What is a fair thing to pay for cutting and loading a 16 to 20-ton crop? A great deal depends upon the condition of the crop.

2514. *By Mr. Paget*: Whether trashed or untrashed? Taking a 20-ton crop as a standard, I would reckon that at 2s. 6d. a ton, trashed, a man could make very good wages; and I would give another 1s.—at any rate, 9d.—a ton for untrashed. Last year Mr. Campbell, down here, had his cane cut by a farmer's son and a labourer, and they made an average of 12s. a day at 3s. per ton all round, with one loading. Of course they were "ringers." Unfortunately, the day's work of a gang is regulated by the slowest man—they will not pass him. With the kanakas it is different—they go ahead "on their own." I do not know how we are going to get over that.

2515. You really appear as one of the representatives of the Canegrowers' Association? Yes.

2516. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you would like to say? No, except that I would like to supplement Mr. Swanton's protest against the inhumanity of deporting these poor wretches.

SINCLAIR MANSON, Manager of the North Isis Central Mill, examined:

S. Manson. 2517. *By the Chairman*: Can you suggest any means by which the district can be supplied with a steady supply of labour after the Pacific Islanders are deported? From the number of people registered, I think there is likely to be a shortage of white labour.

7 April, 1906. 2518. Have you had any difficulty in getting labour for the mill? Not the slightest difficulty for the last two years. In fact, the year before last, where we wanted one man we could have got ten. Last year they were a little more scarce.

2519. Can you always get suitable men? To a certain extent.

2520. *By Mr. Paget*: Might not the plentiful supply be owing to the drought raging in the West? There is not the slightest doubt of that.

2521. *By the Chairman*: As the seasons improve, you expect to find them still less plentiful? Yes.

2522. Do you not think it would be better to settle people in the district whose labour would be available for the district? There is no doubt it would, if they could get land to settle on.

2523. Do you know of any suitable land which is available? No.

2524. Do you know the acreage of the land that is registered in connection with the North Isis Mill? I looked it up some time ago, but I could not say now.

2525. I have a return here which says that in 1900 there were 1,799 acres of land cleared and under cultivation, 1,491 acres of uncleared land, and 1,876 acres which were declared to be unsuitable for cane, making a total of about 5,200 acres? I have no doubt those figures are correct.

S. Manson.
7 April, 1906.

2526. Do you think it would be advantageous if some of that land which is said to be unsuitable for cane could be made available for settlement in small areas? The owners of the land most likely have it applied to some use, such as running stock.

2527. Do you think that is the best use to which the land can be applied in the interests of the holders themselves? Yes.

2528. Is it not to the interest of the holders to keep the labour in the district? Yes.

2529. Then the question is: Is it being applied to its best uses by running stock upon it? Well, a good many cauegrowers also go in for dairying, and it is an open question whether the land is being put to the best use or not. You know a good deal of that land is unsuitable for cultivation of any sort.

2530. Is it swampy? It is forest land.

2531. *By Mr. Paget*: Its total area is divided up into a number of holdings? Yes.

2532. What are the number of holdings supplying you with cane? I cannot say.

2533. Can you give the average area of cane cultivated by the farmers who supply your mill? We never keep a record of the crop. We just go round and see how much each farmer can give us.

2534. *By the Chairman*: Can you suggest any means by which labour may be attracted to the district? Well, we are not certain of the amount of labour that will be wanted.

2535. Do you not think it would be a good thing if a scale of wages were arrived at by the Farmers' Association, so that men could know what wages were offering? A scale has been fixed.

2536. Has it been adopted? I understand that it has been adopted.

2537. What are the wages for an ordinary man at chipping and that sort of thing? I am not interested in that, but £1 a week in the off season and 25s. a week in the crushing season have been fixed for the field labourers.

2538. That includes rations in each case? Yes.

2539. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you any idea how many tons of cane you got last year? Yes; 31,333 tons.

2540. How much of that was cut by white labour? I have not gone into that, but I could have got it if I had known you wanted it. I should imagine, though, that fully one-third of the cane was cut by white labour.

2541. That means that about 10,000 tons was cut by white labour? That is just an estimate.

2542. Have you made an estimate as to how many tons you will crush this year? Something under 40,000 tons, I should imagine.

2543. Have you any idea whether the percentage of white-grown cane will be greater this year than last year? Yes, it will.

2544. How much greater? Say from 10 to 15 per cent.

2545. You do not think that half of this year's crop will be cut by black labour? I have registered for white labour.

2546. *By the Chairman*: Are there any Hindoos here? Yes; I fancy there are more Hindoos than there are kanakas employed by people who are employing coloured labour here.

2547. *By Mr. Paget*: In the whole district? Yes; of course that is my own opinion, but I have never gone into the matter thoroughly.

2548. Are the Hindoos employed by day labour or contract? By day wages.

2549. *By the Chairman*: What wages do the Hindoos get? 5s. to 6s. a day.

2550. And they find themselves? Yes.

2551. Have you anything more to tell us that will be of service to us? No.

ALEXANDER ADIE, Cane Farmer, examined:

2552. *By the Chairman*: Where is your farm? Near the Isis Central Mill.

2553. What is the area of your holding? About 360 acres.

2554. How much have you under cane? About 200 acres.

2555. How much did you cut last year? I should say about 150 acres.

2556. What tonnage of cane did you get? 2,885 tons.

2557. Black or white labour? Black labour, except for the horsedriers.

2558. Did you make an estimate of what it cost you to cut and load that? Something about 2s. a ton as near as possible.

2559. You are still employing black labour? Yes, for the present year.

2560. Do you think that when the kanakas are gone you will get sufficient coloured labour, or will you be thrown back on the Hindoos? I shall probably have to take white labour if there is sufficient available.

2561. Do you anticipate any difficulty in getting suitable labour? Yes.

2562. Do you employ white men sometimes? Yes.

2563. What wages do you pay for chipping? I have never employed men for chipping. I have only employed white men as horsedriers.

2564. What is a fair wage for chipping? A fair wage is £1 a week and found.

2565. Is there anything further you wish to tell us that will be useful to us? No.

A. Adie.
7 April, 1906.

JOHN SMITH, Cane Farmer, examined:

2566. *By the Chairman*: Where is your farm? At North Isis.

2567. What is the area of your holding? 120 acres.

2568. How much of that have you under cane? About 85 acres.

2569. How much did you cut last year? 74 acres.

2570. Black or white labour? Black labour.

2571. What tonnage? 1,295 tons.

2572. What do you think it cost you per ton to cut and load? 2s. 6d. per ton.

2573. Do you expect to get sufficient black labour to go on this year? I have registered the whole of it for white labour.

J. Smith.
7 April, 1906.

- J. Smith. 2574. You are registered now? Yes.
 2575. Do you anticipate getting enough white labour this year? I do not anticipate that.
 7 April, 1906. 2576. Then why did you run the risk of registering? On the one hand I thought I had a chance, and I registered, but I can fall back on the other.
 2577. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you taking steps to supply yourselves with white labour? At present we are doing all we can to get white labour.
 2578. In what direction? There is an association here, and they are trying to get the information as to where there is sufficient labour available.
 2579. Do you think a well-organised labour bureau would be helpful in that direction? I think it would.
 2580. Would the employers make use of it? I think so, provided there was suitable labour coming forward.
 2581. *By Mr. Paget*: You say your association are making inquiries with a view to getting a supply of white labour during the coming season; might I ask in what direction or in what districts they are making inquiries? So far as I understand they have been trying to get information from the southern districts as to what labour will be available, but they have not taken very many steps as yet.
 2582. You mean Beenleigh and the Northern Rivers districts of New South Wales? Yes.
 2583. *By the Chairman*: I suppose it is important that the labour should be here or whereabouts to start work owing to the frost? Yes, it should.
 2584. Is there any means by which you can hold out inducements for any labour to come here in view of a possible contingency in that direction? I do not know.

FRANK COOPER, Labourer, examined:

- F. Cooper. 2585. *By the Chairman*: Do you live here? I have been here since May last.
 2586. *By Mr. Paget*: But you live here now? Yes; I was here all last crushing season.
 7 April, 1906. 2587. *By the Chairman*: Are you married? Yes, I am married.
 2588. Are you in employment at the present time? No.
 2589. Have you been in employment since you have been here? I was cutting and loading during the crushing season, but since then I have only been doing small jobs.
 2590. What small jobs do you get? I have done some stripping.
 2591. What wages did you get? It was piecework.
 2592. What did you earn? 3s. 6d. per day, and I had to find myself.
 2593. *By Mr. Paget*: Were you working for a contractor, or were you working as mates? I was working for the firm practically.
 2594. *By the Chairman*: Were you cutting by contract or by day labour? I was working in one of the company's gangs.
 2595. What did you make at that? 6s. 9d. per day.
 2596. Did you find yourself out of that? Yes.
 2597. What did it cost to find yourself? 5s. a week for the Company's rough food, and the extras ran into 3s. a week.
 2598. *By Mr. Paget*: And the Company provided you with tents and cooking utensils? Yes.
 2599. *By the Chairman*: What hours did you work? From the first time you could see in the morning until the last time you could see at night.
 2600. How many hours would that tot up to in a week? I have seen us up at 4.30 a.m. and 5 a.m., and knocking off again at 7 p.m.
 2601. Would it happen often that you worked those hours? We were up at 4.30 a.m. twice.
 2602. *By Mr. Paget*: Could you not give the hours you worked? No.
 2603. *By the Chairman*: You were your own masters, of course? Yes; every man worked as hard as he could. We worked harder for ourselves than we would ever work for any master.
 2604. You cannot complain of the hours, then? No.
 2605. What hours did you work when you were on day work? I have worked about nine hours on day work this year.
 2606. Was there any difference on Saturday? When I was chipping we knocked off at 4 o'clock on Saturday.
 2607. *By the Chairman*: That is fifty-two hours a week? Yes.
 2608. *By Mr. Paget*: What wages were you paid for chipping? 5s. a day.
 2609. And find yourself? Yes; find myself. The last time we were chipping we were stopped by the rain. It would be two days fine and then three days wet. We put in about half time.
 2610. Can you offer us any suggestion as regards the labour question? What I came here for was to speak about the price put forward by the association of suppliers to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. That scale is not sufficient to bring labour here.
 2611. *By the Chairman*: Is that the scale that appeared in the Bundaberg Mail? Yes.
 2612. You do not think it is good enough? No, I do not think so. If there was a sliding scale, with an increase for every 3 tons per acre, and an extra allowance of 1s. per ton for untrashed cane, it would be better.
 2613. That is a matter of regulations, and we have nothing to do with regulations—You should bring that before the Farmers' Association? We offered to send two delegates to meet two from the Farmers' Association and discuss the matter on amicable terms, but we have had no reply.
 2614. We can do nothing in that direction? The bonus was granted to the planters on condition that they fixed a good standard wage, and if they fix the wages on a small scale, then it is unfair to the workmen.
 2615. *By Mr. Paget*: That condition of things does not apply this season? But if they get it this season they will continue it next year. If they can get a man to work for 5s. this year, they will make him work for it again next year.
 2616. *By Mr. Nielson*: The question of wages is one that you will have to decide with the employers, as it is entirely outside the scope of this Commission to go into that matter? Well, men will not come here from the south unless they earn a fair wage for the number of hours they work.
 2617. *By the Chairman*: What is a fair wage? Well, 3s. per ton of cane cut and loaded.

2618. That would leave nothing to the men who are now in the industry? If a man works hard he is worth 8s. a day.
2619. Have you ever registered in any of the labour bureaux throughout the country? No.
2620. Do you not think it would be a good thing for men to register at the labour bureaux? If there was a labour bureau here it would be a good thing.
2621. There is a labour bureau here, and Mr. Power here looks after it? The farmers do not engage here.
2622. One of the farmers told us this morning that the labour bureau helped him very much? I never heard of one man being engaged there.
2623. Well, you know now that the clerk of petty sessions here is in charge of the labour bureau, and he will register the names of all men who want work, and he will also let the farmers know what men he has? That would do.
2624. *By Mr. Paget:* You will not have to pay any fees either? I agree with that.
2625. *By the Chairman:* You had better let the others know that? Yes.
2626. *By Mr. Nielson:* The farmers should give him the information regarding the men they want? I know one farmer who can employ twenty men, but who is now employing twelve men chipping. He pays them 5s. 6d. a day and keeps them at work right through the year. He has 200 acres on his farm. We would not think we had cause to growl if we could always get 5s. 6d. a day in slack seasons.
2627. What would be a fair weekly wage in the crushing season? If they worked a reasonable number of hours 30s. a week and tucker would be a fair thing. If they had to work the hours we worked in the gangs, then they should pay 35s. and rations.
2628. What is a reasonable number of hours to work? Nine hours a day.
2629. That is fifty-two hours a week? Yes.

F. Cooper.
7 April, 1906.

ALEXANDER EASTAUGHFFE, Cane Farmer and Commission Agent, examined:

2630. *By the Chairman:* What are you? I am a farmer and commission agent, and also secretary of the Canegrowers' Association.
2631. What is the area of your farm? Eighty acres.
2632. How much have you got under cane? Twenty-four acres.
2633. How much cane did you cut last year? I only planted last year. I only made a recent purchase.
2634. Have you registered for the bonus? Yes. I wish to speak more in regard to the labour aspect.
2635. What labour are you employing? Two.
2636. What wages do you give them? £1 a week and found.
2637. You are secretary of the Growers' Association? Yes.
2638. Have the association adopted a scale of wages? Yes.
2639. Has that scale been adopted by the members of the association? Yes; it was adopted at a full meeting of farmers.
2640. Was that scale of wages published in the *Bundaberg Mail* of last week? Yes; but there were one or two mistakes in it.
2641. *By Mr. Nielson:* Will you supply the secretary of the Commission with a correct copy of the scale of wages? Yes. [*vide Appendix I, p. 1.*]
2642. *By Mr. Paget:* Was that the scale which was proposed at a meeting of farmers held in Bundaberg last Saturday? I went there as a representative of the Growers' Association. Their scale was not quite equal to ours.
2643. *By the Chairman:* Did you know that there was a labour bureau here? No.
2644. Well, you know it now? Yes.
2645. It will be useful to the farmers? I think so. With regard to the scale of wages we fixed, I think we are likely to have some difficulty in obtaining suitable labour. I informed the manager of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company with regard to that. That company is endeavouring to induce workers to come here from the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, men who have had experience in the sugar business. Even if they increase the rate of pay on any former scale, I quite recognise that there is still going to be a difficulty in obtaining labour.
2646. *By Mr. Nielson:* What are the wages? 2s. 3d. to 4s. per ton, with a bonus of 6d. per ton for every ton cut. With regard to the price paid last year without a bonus, some particulars came under my own knowledge. In a season of twenty-seven weeks a gang earned £64 17s. 1d. per man.
2647. *By the Chairman:* What does that come to per day? It is about £2 11s. per week.
2648. How much is deducted for food? 8s. or 9s. per week.
2649. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many hours do they work? They are contractors, and they work their own hours. I should think they would work from about ten to eleven hours a day. We fix our hours at about fifty-eight hours a week.
2650. What do you fix for daywork? 6s. a day.
2651. *By the Chairman:* And found? No.
2652. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think it is a fair thing to expect men to cut from 2½ to 3 tons of cane a day for 6s., and find themselves? No, but we fixed the 6s. as a minimum on account of having to deal with labour that is not qualified by experience. One grower I know of paid 7s. per day last year, and it cost him 9s. per ton to cut his cane on account of the labour being inexperienced. Even last year we had a difficulty in obtaining really capable labour.
2653. You anticipate more difficulty now owing to the good season in the West? Yes; and there are so many more farms registered this year under white labour conditions than was the case last year.
2654. *By Mr. Paget:* What steps have your association taken to supply this extra demand? The Colonial Sugar Refining Company are the only people who have taken up the matter of providing labour from any district outside our own.
2655. *By the Chairman:* The Colonial Sugar Refining Company act as Providence to you? I do not think so.
2656. You leave everything to them? That is because they have a better chance of doing something than the individual farmers have.
2657. But the association of farmers can do more than the individual farmer can? That is so.

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Eastaughffe.
7 April, 1906.

A. 2658. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think you ought to discover how many men the members of your association want for a start, and then, if they inform the Labour Bureau how many they want, the bureau here will assist you by communicating with the other bureaux—Would that not be a practical way of doing it? Yes, I think so.

7 April, 1906. 2659. *By the Chairman*: Do you make weekly reports? No, monthly reports.
2660. If you let the officer in charge of the Labour Bureau here know the number of men you wanted he could communicate with the head office; they would let you know where there was any labour, and it is very likely your difficulty would be remedied; so it would be very much to your advantage to do that? Yes.

JOHN THOMPSON, Missionary of the Church of Christ to the Polynesians, examined:

J. Thompson, 2661. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am a missionary of the Church of Christ to the Polynesians.

7 April, 1906. 2662. Have you been long in that work? I am the pioneer missionary. I have been fourteen years in the Isis district.

2663. You are thoroughly conversant, then, with the islanders? Yes. I have been a quarter of a century amongst them, and have been down in the islands with them.

2664. How long were you down in the islands? It is two and a-half years since I came back from the New Hebrides.

2665. *By Mr. Paget*: How long were you there? I was away there ten months.

2666. *By the Chairman*: What are the conditions as regards openings for labour in the New Hebrides? The French settlers were offering employment to a number of the islanders, but they had a difficulty in getting them. So have the English settlers. Very few of the "boys" who have been in Queensland care to recruit either for French or English settlers in the islands—the wages are so small.

2667. What are they? 2s. 6d. a week and find their own clothing.

2668. And native food, I suppose? Native food—yams, rice, and taro.

2669. Had you any experience of the way in which the islanders were treated by the French? Yes.

2670. Were they fairly well treated? Since the appointment of a French Commissioner they have been better treated than they were before. The English and French Commissioners live at Vila.

2671. Would not Queensland "return boys" get a better wage? They do not offer any better wages.

2672. Are the islanders healthy? No. Malaria is all through them.

2673. Is it any worse there than in other islands? No.

2674. Do you know what the feeling of the islanders here is with regard to returning to the islands? With the exception of one boy in the district, they all want to go home. I have questioned them all on that point. There is only one who has asked permission to remain, and he is a married man. Even the married men wish to go.

2675. Do you know any cases of islanders married to white women? Several.

2676. When you say that, with one exception, they all wish to go home, are you referring to the Solomon Islanders as well as to the natives of the New Hebrides? Yes.

2677. *By Mr. Paget*: Did you speak to the islanders who are settled on the land? Yes. They want to go home as soon as the crushing season is over. They say it is no use their remaining here when all their countrymen have gone. There are a lot who are anxious to go now, but they cannot get away till July.

2678. What are they? New Hebrides boys.

2679. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are any of these men destitute? There are some of them very destitute at present.

2680. How many? About forty of them are walking about. Many of them are being helped by their countrymen. They are not allowed to want, but they have no money.

2681. *By the Chairman*: Will those who have no money, and therefore cannot take home trade, be welcome amongst their friends in the islands? Undoubtedly.

2682. In spite of their going back empty-handed? They do not like to return empty-handed, because they like to take back boxes and clothing to show their friends; but, as far as being in any danger is concerned, there is not the slightest danger in the New Hebrides. Tongoa, to which Mr. Swanton referred, is one of the most civilised in the group. Your life is as safe there as it is in Queensland.

2683. Of course he was referring to twenty years ago? I have lived with the missionary there.

2684. Do you think it would be judicious to deport the islanders in large numbers—would it not be better to deport them gradually, having regard to the food supply? If they land after the yam season there would probably be sufficient food for them.

2685. That is after March? Yes. There would be enough food for them, and they would have time to clear some land, and plant their own yams and taro. If they go down at the end of the season, yams are likely to be scarce.

2686. When is the end of the yam season? They generally store their yams about April, and they plant them in September, when the warm weather is commencing.

2687. In that case, you would advocate deporting them between the early part of April and the end of August? Yes.

2688. You would not advocate landing them in the warmest months? No; they would land in the fever season if they went then.

2689. Are you speaking of the Solomons as well as the New Hebrides? Yes. The yam season is the same in all the groups.

2690. But is it not a fact that in the Solomons the natives do not store their food? They all store yams they must.

2691. *By Mr. Paget*: But would not the fact of a large extra number of months being suddenly landed in their midst bring about a scarcity very much quicker than otherwise? Undoubtedly.

2692. How would these men live until the next yam crop was ready to dig? Their friends will assist them until such time as they clear a piece of land and plant their own yams and taro. I saw no want among the natives who were landed when I was in the islands.

2693. *By the Chairman*: But in what numbers were the men landed then? They were sent home the same as now.

2694. But here you have to send home 6,000 of them? That is a different question.

2695. *By Mr. Nielson*: I think there are about 3,000 New Hebrides "boys" in Queensland? Yes.

2696. Supposing they all went home, and were distributed right through the group at once, by what percentage would the population be increased? The islands are fast becoming depopulated. I could not tell you what the returns are from the missionaries. I have not seen any recently.

J. Thompson.
7 April, 1906.

2697. Do you think there are 100,000 inhabitants in the whole group? There may be, but I doubt it.

2698. *By the Chairman:* Are any returns published? You can get an estimate by applying to the Presbyterian Synod.

2699. *By Mr. Paget:* No census has been taken—it is merely a rough estimate? Yes. You cannot take a census. The missionaries give an estimate of the population in the various districts they travel through.

2700. But there are not missionaries at all the “passages” to which the islanders will be returned? Certainly not; but the natives are very hospitable to their returned friends, so far as providing food is concerned.

2701. Provided the food supply is there—that is the point? Yes.

2702. *By the Chairman:* They might have the will, but not the means? Yes. They are very generous in providing food.

2703. *By Mr. Nielson:* As the boats go down, could not the Government agent find out at the various places how the food supply is? He could. Last year it was very dry in the New Hebrides, but the wet season set in and saved their yams, and possibly they now have an abundance of food.

2704. Do you communicate with the missionaries down there? Yes. I have missionary stations of my own there.

2705. Do you think the natives of New Hebrides are pretty well aware that their friends are all coming back from Queensland? Undoubtedly they are. They were told by the missionaries and by others too.

2706. Are the missionaries not teaching them to make some provision for their friends when they return? The missionaries see that they are provided for when they land near the mission stations, and encourage their friends to show them every hospitality.

2707. You think that the risk of the food supply being short is very remote in the New Hebrides? Very remote. I do not think there is any fear of it for the number who are to go back.

2708. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything else you can tell us—Can nothing be done by the authorities with regard to these “boys” who are walking about? They are not allowed to work.

2709. The best thing is to apply to the inspector? That has been done, and they are still walking about, and no vessel has been chartered to take them home.

2710. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have they not had an opportunity of returning home? No.

2711. Well, the last employer is liable to maintain them—If you give their names to the inspector he will see that that is done—If he does not, if you let the authorities in Brisbane know, they will see that it is done? An application has been made to the office in Brisbane about these “boys,” but we have had no reply yet, and the “boys” are still walking about.

2712. *By the Chairman:* How long ago was that? Ten days ago.

2713. *By Mr. Paget:* Evidence has been given to show that numbers of the “boys” have come from other districts? There are a few from Bundaberg, but there are very few who are not local “boys.” I travel through the district and come in contact with them all.

CHARLES EDGAR ADAMS, Cane Farmer, examined:

2714. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer.

2715. What is the area of your holding? A little over 100 acres.

2716. How much is under cane? Nearly 95 acres.

2717. How much did you cut last year? 80 acres.

2718. For what tonnage? 1,952 tons.

2719. Black or white labour? 34 acres were cut by white labour, the balance by black.

2720. Was the white labour paid by contract or by the day? By contract, and was supplied by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.

2721. Do you know what the men earned? On 26 acres they earned 9s. 6d. a day, wet or fine.

2722. What price were you paying? The company charged me 3s. 6½d., part half-trashed, some untrashed, and the balance twice trashed.

2723. Are you employing white or black labour now? I have hemmed myself in so that I am all right for black labour about the place. The cane is entirely white labour.

2724. Do you anticipate any general shortage of labour in the district next year? Of suitable men. There are any amount of loafers about.

2725. What is a fair wage for chipping? Certainly not exceeding 20s. a week.

2726. *By Mr. Paget:* What wages for ploughmen? I have always given about 20s.

2727. That is a pretty constant job? Yes. If I get a good man he always comes back to me, and I am always ready to employ him.

2728. *By the Chairman:* Is there any suggestion you can give us about settling white labour in the district so that it may be always available—Do you approve of free use being made of the Government Labour Bureau? Yes, and I certainly approve of the idea of the certificate. But would it not be possible to inform the officer in charge of the bureau what you think of a man? You cannot possibly put it in a certificate.

2729. *By Mr. Paget:* Is not that rather a matter for the employers to tell you? Yes, but how is it possible to give the information? I had a man the other day who was a splendid worker—I could not wish for a better. I gave him his cheque on a Saturday, and he came back as drunk as a lord. He afterwards got a place through my recommendation. I said he was a good man, and he went reeling away to his work on Monday. What could you do with a man like that? The difficulty is to keep them sober.

2730. But do you not think that one way of getting men to live more settled lives would be to settle them down on homes of their own, instead of having them walking about the roads? Certainly. The great trouble with cane-cutters is that we may employ 100 men at one time, and directly the season is over we do not want more than twenty. What is to become of the other eighty? They must become nomads; and when a man carries his swag for six months, with no money in his pocket, he becomes a loafer. I have been thirty-five years in Queensland, and know.

C. E. Adams.

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C. E. Adams. 2731. Would not such a scheme of settling them down in the district on small areas change them from nomads into reputable citizens? It is not their fault. I do not blame them. But what can a man do? 7 April, 1906. He gets a little money; he knocks it down, and then for six months he is knocking about without getting a penny. That is the fault I find with white labour as against black. I have had first-class men; but what can you do with them?

2732. *By the Chairman*: If those men had homes to return to, surely it would be better for them and for everybody? Yes; but there are very few men who could make a living on 10 acres.

2733. *By Mr. Paget*: But the living is to be made out of the cultivation of cane? What are they to do during the other six months? They could make some kind of a living out of their land.

2734. *By the Chairman*: The idea is that they will earn a cheque, which will assist in maintaining them and improving their homesteads? Is it not a terrible thing to have an able-bodied man sitting down doing nothing for six months on 10 acres of land?

2735. Give him more if you like, if he can utilise it? If you give him 30 or 40 acres, he will want to cut his own cane, not mine.

2736. He would not have any cane—at all events, not for the first two or three years—you would meet the difficulty for two or three years that way? I do not think so.

2737. *By Mr. Paget*: The position seems to be that there is going to be a very big gap in the labour market to be filled up after this coming season, and we would like you or some other gentleman to give us some suggestions as to how that gap may be filled up, with profit not only to the sugar industry, but to the men? I have been connected with the industry for twenty-two years. For six and a-half years I was manager for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company in the North, where I founded Goondi. I was thirteen years with the Queensland Investment Company, and I have employed Italians.

2738. *By the Chairman*: What do you think of Italians? They were very good, but you want an interpreter. We were very lucky in getting a good one in Bundaberg.

2739. Were they good workers? They worked very well, but at the same time I had a baker and a barber and a butcher and all sorts of fellows. They were not agriculturists.

2740. You want Piedmontese? Yes; they would do first rate.

2741. *By Mr. Paget*: They were not Maltese? No; they were a mixture from all sorts of places.

2742. Have you anything else to say? Yes; I think I am one of the oldest colonists in the colony, and for twenty-five years I have worked my kanakas. I have had as many as 475 at one time, and I never had a "boy" who raised his hand or misbehaved himself to a woman in my employ. As these "boys" are going to be exported, it is only fair that I should be allowed to express that opinion and have it placed on record.

HARRY WILLIAM LEE, State School Teacher, examined:

H. W. Lee. 2743. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am head master of the State school at Childers. 7 April, 1906. 2744. I believe you have some scheme for settling people on the land? I have a scheme for inducing men to live in the district.

2745. We shall be glad to hear it? In the surrounding districts there is land on which men could settle with 50 acres each, and in their spare time they could work on their own holdings and maintain themselves when they were not working in the cane-field.

2746. Can you indicate where these lands are? Yes, at Dillarnal and Booyal, from 18 to 23 miles away from here.

2747. Is there much land there? There is a very large area.

2748. What description of land is it? It is nearly all scrub land.

2749. *By Mr. Paget*: It is partly scrub land and partly forest land? No; it is nearly all scrub land.

2750. *By the Chairman*: Is it open to selection? Yes. Then there is the Good Night Scrub at Tenningerling, 30 miles away.

2751. In what areas would you recommend it to be taken up? In agricultural homestead areas at 2s. 6d per acre.

2752. Where would you get the people to put on those lands? You provide the men and I will put them there.

2753. We know the land is there, but we want to know from you the source from which we can get occupants for the land—that is, men who would be useful? If there are not enough men amongst the unemployed of the other States, I would suggest bringing them from the British Isles.

2754. *By Mr. Paget*: Is the land you mention flat or hilly country? It is hilly, but good agricultural country.

2755. Good soil? Yes.

2756. And well watered? Yes it is very well watered, by Degilbo Creek and the Burnett River.

2757. *By the Chairman*: Are there any settlers there? Yes.

2758. Do you think that 80 acres is the smallest that a man can do with? Yes, 80 acres would be a fair holding.

2759. How would you suggest that a man should get the means to fence the land and make a home? If a man earned enough at crushing, he would be able to erect a fence of two plain wires and one barbed wire. I have known men who have had no other implements than a hoe, cornsheller, and axe, and they turned their homesteads into freeholds.

2760. What amount of cash would a man require if he had a wife? I do not refer to men with wives at all.

2761. You surely do not think you would get single men to settle on these places? They are walking about with their swags now, and if they will not settle down now I do not know what prospects they have got for the future.

2762. Of course, if they desired to get married and make homes for themselves they could avail themselves of the opportunity to do it? Yes.

2763. Can you call to mind any instance where single men are following that sort of life? I know one man who wants to get a place to work on in the off season.

2764. *By Mr. Nielson*: You know there is plenty of land open to selection? Yes, but they go round looking for the best. Outsiders will be content with an indifferent class of land. I was alluding to a class of labour that is wanted in the crushing season, and this would enable them to earn something on their holdings in the slack season. It would also require Government aid in the matter of the storage

of maize. In most cases the farmers have a good crop, but get practically nothing for it. If they were able to store their maize until they got a good price, they could pay rent for the storage, and the money they would make in the crushing season would keep them going.

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2765. *By Mr. Paget*: You mean it to be stored in a tank? Yes.

2766. *By Mr. Nielson*: A grain shed? No; a tank would be better, and the farmers could be charged a small rent for it.

2767. *By the Chairman*: Have you anything more to tell us? No, I was only thinking of a scheme to keep these men employed when they are not cane-cutting.

NILS LAURITZ ROSENLUND, Farmer and Timber-getter, examined:

2768. *By the Chairman*: Are you a farmer at present? Not at present.

N. L.
Rosenlund.

2769. On what subject can you give us any information? On the matter of settlement on the land.

2770. Do you know this land that the last witness referred to? Perfectly well.

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2771. Is it suitable land for close settlement? Yes; there is a lot of land there suitable for close settlement, and it was open for settlement on one occasion.

2772. Do you approve of Mr. Lee's scheme? Yes; it is a very good scheme. I know several men who went over there and settled, and later on got married.

2773. And if the land there was made available it would be readily taken up? Yes; if it was opened up,

2774. Is it not open for selection now? No. There is no land there open for settlement just now, pending the construction of a railway into that district.

2775. *By Mr. Paget*: Would it be a continuation of this railway? Yes.

2776. How long has it been withdrawn from selection? Over two years.

2777. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think it would be just as well to try to get that land reopened? We applied to have it reopened, but the Minister said he wanted it for close settlement.

2778. If it were opened, would men take it up and settle on it? Yes.

2779. In small areas of 80 acres? They would settle on areas up to 160 acres.

EVI, Pacific Islander, examined:

2780. *By the Chairman*: What island you belong to? Santo.

Evi.

2781. What do you want to say? We want to know if we can get work till a ship goes away to our islands.

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2782. "Boy" got no money? Yes; no money.

2783. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you want to go home or to stop in Queensland for the crushing season? This year our time up. We want to go home.

2784. You want work? No.

2785. *By the Chairman*: If ship go to New Hebrides, you want to go now? My countrymen alonga Bundaberg think they go too.

Mr. Thompson: Suppose ship go New Hebrides now, you want to go? Some want to go, some want to stop.

Mr. Thompson: Do you want to go home? Yes.

Mr. Thompson [to another "Boy," a native of Ambrym]: You want to go home? No.*

LONAL, Pacific Islander, examined:

2786. *By the Chairman*: What island do you belong to? Api.

Lonal.

2787. Where have you been working? I been work alonga North.

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2788. Will "boy" here go North, suppose master want him? I no like him alonga Mulgrave.

2789. What for you no like him Mulgrave? Take off too much wages when I been sick.

2790. Suppose "boy" get sick now, get him wages all the same?—

2791. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many weeks you out of work? Nine.

2792. *By the Chairman*: You no got money? Little bit.

2793. *By Mr. Nielson*: Where you been work last time? Mr. Adie.

2794. You been look out job? Yes.

2795. You been look out ship go home? No.

2796. *By Mr. Paget*: You no want him ship? No ship been ready.

2797. *By Mr. Nielson*: Suppose ship ready, you go? Yes.

2798. How many Api men want stop? Me not know.

2799. Suppose you go get work before money finished? I want wages.

2800. How much wages you want if you go North? £1 a week and tucker.

2801. You think you get any work crushing time? No.

Mr. Thompson: They started digging nuts the other day for a Chinaman, but I told them they were not allowed to do that. They were making about 2s. 6d. a day, and that was keeping them going until there was a ship going.

2802. *Mr. Nielson* [to Witness]: Would you go North for 12s. a week and tucker? No.

2803. You think to go as soon as ship ready? Yes.

BITTOON, Pacific Islander, examined:

2804. *By the Chairman*: What island you belong to? Api.

Bittoon.

2805. What you want to say? I want tell you, if we stay here till ship ready, and we get nothing to do, what we going to do? We have to do something for our living at the present time.

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2806. Do you think you will get work in the crushing season? I don't know.

2807. What master you last time? Mr. Walker, alonga Bundaberg.

2808. How much long time? I don't know. I been in New South Wales, and then go to Mr. Walker.

* NOTE.—All the Pacific Islanders who were examined by the Commission at Childers were introduced by Mr. Thompson, missionary, and, at the conclusion of the examination of "Evi" Mr. Thompson interrogated the "boys" present in the Court House to the number of some twenty-five, as to whether they desired to return home or to remain in Queensland, and then—

The Chairman asked him: How many want to go home, and how many want to stay?

Mr. Thompson: Half of them are undecided. The other day they wanted to go, and now they want to stop. They think there is a possibility of work.

Mr. Power: The other day about fifteen New Hebrides "boys" were willing to go.

- Bittoon. 2809. Since you came to this place, you not been able get work? No.
 2810. You been ask same fellow master? No; I not been ask anybody for work.
 7 April, 1906. *Mr. Thompson*: He has been keeping a boarding-house until recently.
 2811. *By Mr. Paget*: You want to know where you get "ki-ki"? Yes. I no live without tucker. We have to do something.
 2812. Why not ask same fellow master? Me been thinking of that. We been digging nuts for Chinaman, and Mr. Thompson say, "You no do that." Then we come to town and wait for letter. We want something to do. We want bread.
 2813. Suppose schooner close up Bundaberg go to New Hebrides, you want to go home? No; I wait for the end of the year.
 2814. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would you like to go North? No. I no go North.
 2815. *By the Chairman*: Plenty ki-ki stop alonga North? I no want to go North.
 2816. *By Mr. Nielson*: Suppose you get job to go North, you go? No.
 2817. *By the Chairman*: Then what you do if no ki-ki here? I have to do something.
 2818. You will not go home till the 31st of December, you will not go North, and no ki-ki here, then what will you do? I no go North, but plenty more "boys" want to go North.
 2819. But what will you do? I will stop here in Childers till Government make me go.
 2820. Have you got any money? I have no money. I spend 'em all my money in Australia.
 2821. Then what will you do? I stop here.
 2822. What will you do here? I think it better for Government to let us "boys" do little work to earn our living.
 2823. *By Mr. Paget*: We cannot let you break the law which big fellow Government make, and you cannot work unless you have an agreement? I no got agreement.
 2824. *By Mr. Nielson*: You save those "boys" behind you? Yes.
 2825. Have they got any money? I cannot tell you that.
 2826. Are they all hard up? They might have money.
 2827. Are some of them hard up? I do not know.
 2828. Any "boy" owe you money at the boarding-house? No, they all pay me.

GAYMOONA, a Native of Savo Island, examined:

- Gaymoona. 2829. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you want to go home? Yes, if ship go home.
 2830. Suppose ship come to Bundaberg will you go home? I want to know how many ships go home.
 7 April, 1906. 2831. Ships go for long time many more trips? Me Solomon Island "boy," and all Solomon "boys" tell me to say they all going home.
 2832. *By the Chairman*: You are the spokesman for the others, and you say they all want to go home? Yes, all go home.
 2833. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many "boys" no work? About thirty altogether, or twenty-six.
 2834. *By Mr. Paget*: Ship "Ivauhoe" leave Bundaberg to-day for Solomon Islands, why you not go in that ship? No.
 2835. *By Mr. Nielson*: "Sydney Belle" come to Bundaberg to-day too, you want to go in that one? All Solomon "boys" go together. They frightened no more ships.
 2836. *By Mr. Paget*: Plenty more ships to take you home? Well, we want to all go home together, as it is no good for half to go and half to stay behind.
 2837. Altogether everyone go home? Yes; everyone go.

LAPPA, a Native of Tanna Island, examined:

- Lappa. 2838. *By Mr. Paget*: How long have you been in Queensland? Twenty-three years.
 7 April, 1906. 2839. Have you been home to your island in that time? No.
 2840. Do you want to go home directly? No.
 2841. Have you got a job? No; but I will get some work.
 2842. What are you doing now—walking about? Just finished work, and got pay last Friday.
 2843. You got some money to buy ki-ki? Yes.
 2844. You no want to go home just now? No.
 2845. You want to work a little bit more alonga crushing? Yes.

BAGOOAH, a Native of Sandwich Island, examined:

- Bagooah. 2846. *By Mr. Nielson*: You a missionary "boy"? Yes.
 2847. You a backslider? No.
 7 April, 1906. 2848. *By Mr. Paget*: You go to church? Oh yes.
 2849. How long have you been in Queensland? Twenty-three years.
 2850. You went home one time and came back? I go up North, and then go home one time, and come back again.
 2851. Do you want to go home? I did want to go home, but inspector told me I cannot go for eight months.
 2852. Who told you that? Caulfeild.
 2853. You mean Mr. Caulfeild? Yes; Mr. Caulfeild.
 2854. When did he tell you that? Last week.
 2855. Did you want to go home on schooner "Ivauhoe"? Yes, but inspector told the Sandwich men that they could not go home for eight months.
 2856. Are you sure Mr. Caulfeild told you that? He told my countrymen, but not me.
Mr. Thompson: I would like to point out that this man's evidence is not reliable, as he has been drinking and is a bit elevated.
 2857. *By Mr. Paget*: Who you work for last time? Thompson.
 2858. Mr. Thompson? Yes.
 2859. How long since you got your money from him? I get money and finish up yesterday.
 2860. You got some money then? Oh, a little bit.
 2861. What did you do with your money? I buy some grog.
 2862. Do you want to go to work or go home? Suppose ship ready then I go home.
 2863. If the ship is ready for you to-morrow you will go? No; I want to stop till end of year and then I go.
 2864. *By Mr. Nielson*: You want to have another Christmas? Yes.

JIMMY AILEE, a Native of Gala Island, examined :

2865. *By Mr. Paget*: How long you stop in Queensland? Thirty-seven years.
 2866. You stop thirty-seven years altogether? Yes; in New South Wales and Queensland.
 2867. *By Mr. Nielson*: You got 'em ticket? Oh, yes.
 2868. *By Mr. Paget*: What you want to say? People say you want to send "boys" home.
 2869. We do not want to send "boys" home; do you want to go home? No.
 2870. Where you work? Mr. Mills.
 2871. You got ticket and you will not have to go home? All right.

J. Ailee.

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Tow, a Native of Ambrym Island, examined :

2872. *By Mr. Paget*: How long have you been in Queensland? I do not know how long, as I young boy when I came here.
 2873. You married? Yes, I married to a native of Australia.
 2874. A half-caste girl? Yes.
 2875. Where you work last? Mr. Conlan, at Horton.
 2876. How many pickaninnies you got? Two.
 2877. How old are they? One child three years, and baby six weeks.
 2878. You want to go home now or by and by? I don't know what to do about my wife.
 2879. That is the trouble. Would you like to go if you could take your wife and pickaninnies? Suppose I have to go, I like to take my wife too.
 2880. Which would you sooner do? Well, if Government say we must go, then we must go; but if Government say we can stop, then I stop. Some people say I can stop.
 2881. Suppose you go, you pay misus's passage? Yes.
 2882. You pay £7 for misus now? Yes.
 2883. By and by it might cost £10 to take misus home? Yes. My wife native of this country, but she say if I got to go home she will come with me.
 2884. *By Mr. Nielson*: You tell your misus all about going? Yes.
 2885. *By Mr. Paget*: Where were you married? I married in Bundaberg, at Mr. Mackenzie's Presbyterian Church.
 2886. Do you want to stop until the crushing is finished. Yes; I keep a boarding-house.

Tow.

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THOMAS HUBERT WELLS, Cane Farmer, examined :

2887. *By the Chairman*: What area have you? 200 acres.
 2888. How much of it is under cultivation? The whole of it; but it is not all cane.
 2889. How much have you got under cane? 160 acres.
 2890. How much cane did you cut last year? 140 acres.
 2891. Do you know the tonnage? Yes; 2,600 tons.
 2892. White or black labour? Nearly all white men.
 2893. Have you any idea what it cost you to cut and load that cane? It was cut and loaded by the company's gang. I think it cost 3s. 10d. per ton. In addition to that, I had to cart it, and draw the trucks for a quarter of a mile.
 2894. What wages did you pay for general farm hands? From 15s. to 25s. a week.
 2895. According to the value of the labour? Yes.
 2896. Do you anticipate having any trouble in connection with labour during the next season? I do not anticipate much trouble, unless the people from the North compete with us and take our labour away from us.
 2897. *By Mr. Paget*: You mean the white labour? Yes.
 2898. *By the Chairman*: Then there would be a difficulty? Yes.
 2899. It appears to us that the problem to solve is how to get a more permanent class of labour settled around the cane districts; have you any suggestions to offer in that direction? If the Government could offer pieces of land of 100 to 150 acres each to the people around the Scrub, where men could live and keep their wives and families, it would be a help to us.
 2900. Is there any land of that sort available within a reasonable distance? Plenty.
 2901. Within what distance? There is plenty of land in the Isis Scrub within 2 miles of the main line.
 2902. *By Mr. Paget*: That is forest land? Yes.
 2903. Of what quality? The quality is not of the best, but it is as good as any forest land in this district.
 2904. *By the Chairman*: Is it a pasturage reserve, or a Crown lands reserve, or what? There is a considerable quantity of Crown land, and there are three or four pasturage reserves of 2,000 acres each.
 2905. What were they reserved for? They were reserved as pasturage reserves in case they were wanted. They are not used as pasturage reserves, and people use them to run their cattle on.
 2906. There is no necessity for them any longer? There appears to be no necessity, and they would put the land to better use if people were settled on it.
 2907. Is there water on those reserves? In all cases there is water in places I could not say that there is water on every 100 acres.
 2908. Is it a place where they could get water easily by sinking shallow wells? I am not prepared to say that, but in the few instances I know it is.
 2909. Are there any instances of settlements of that sort? I know a few men who have homes outside the scrub who work during the cane season, and in the off season too, with different farmers and planters.
 2910. Married men? Yes.
 2911. What areas are they living on? I think they are mostly 160-acre blocks, which they have taken up under the ordinary homestead conditions. But that is somewhat expensive for people of that kind, because they have to pay survey fees, and the usual rent amounts to about 6d. per acre per annum.
 2912. Would you suggest something more liberal than that? Yes. I would suggest that people should be given the land on terms which would practically cost them nothing, and some conditions such

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- T. H. Webb. as that they should live on the blocks for five years and keep down noxious weeds or anything the Government liked to insist upon.
- 7 April, 1906. 2913. *By Mr. Paget*: That could be done by a system of special leases, could it not? I am not aware of the provisions of the Land Act.
2914. *By the Chairman*: Have those men been living outside the Scrub long enough to put it outside the range of an experiment? One or two have. It seems to me that in that way we would get a class of men to settle down. There is plenty of work in the Scrub, and a good man can always get plenty of work and command good wages.
2915. Not all the year round? That would be all the year round.
2916. Do the men of whom you are speaking do any cultivation? They have always got the opportunity of making a little bit of a garden or an orchard. In most of those areas there is a little land that is fairly good.
2917. Could they grow something to help the flourbag, such as pumpkins and potatoes? Most decidedly.
2918. You think there would be some prospect of success in that direction? I think there would be if they could get the class of men who would settle down. If they had a piece of land like that they could keep a horse, and it is not much for a man to ride 2 or 3 miles to and from his work.
2919. *By Mr. Paget*: If they were further away, they could ride to their work at the beginning of the week and go home at the end of the week? But there are farms within a reasonable distance, so that they could ride in and out every day.
2920. *By the Chairman*: Do you know any land outside those reserves fit for settlement? There is a great deal of land all round the Scrub that is very much of the same nature. I cannot call it agricultural land; but if a man has from 80 to 150 acres, he can always run a few cows, and keep a horse, and cultivate enough land to grow vegetables and things of that kind for himself. There is no poorer land than there is about Isis Junction, yet they grow beautiful vegetables there.
2921. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you appearing to-day as a representative of the Canegrowers' Association? No; I was nominated to appear on behalf of the Agricultural Association of Childers.
2922. Has the association taken any steps with regard to introducing labour for the crushing season? None whatever. Our functions are not particularly in that direction. We are merely an association to hold a show, and run the agricultural part of the business. There is another association called the Canegrowers' Association.
2923. Are you a member of the Canegrowers' Association? Not at present.
2924. *By the Chairman*: Are there any representatives of the Canegrowers' Association present? I believe they sent three representatives.
2925. *By Mr. Paget*: I wished to ask you if the canegrowers, as a body, are taking into consideration the situation that may arise at the end of the year—We are told that there are between 200 and 300 islanders at present working in this district, and about the same number of Hindoos—After the end of this year a greater number of white men will be required—Do you know if any steps are being taken to fill the gap? I am not aware of it. I do not appear for the Canegrowers' Association, and am not prepared to speak on their behalf. I think it is a mistake to say that there are between 200 and 300 Hindoos here, though I do not contradict the statement.
2926. Mr. Manson made the statement? There have been, but I have not seen a Hindoo for six months.
2927. That was during last crushing season? I should say probably the crushing before that. There were very few Hindoos here last season. Mr. Manson comes from the northern end of the Scrub, and I am not often there; but I know there are comparatively few at this end of the Scrub, and have been for the last twelve or eighteen months.
2928. You say that you do not anticipate any great difficulty this season—What do you think about the future? We are all thinking about the future, but we do not quite know where we are to get the labour from.
2929. We desire to get suggestions from you? The only practical suggestion I can offer is that the Government should follow something on the lines which you have been asking questions about, and settle people on the land, and also that the local Labour Bureau should be put on a thoroughly business footing.
2930. Could you make any suggestion as to how the operations of the bureau could be improved? I am not finding fault with the officer in charge, because he has so many things to do that the thing has been allowed to drift along. But if the bureau could be put on a business footing, so that an employer wanting labour could send a note to the officer in charge of the bureau, and the men registered their names there, it would be a good thing. The main fault is that men do not register.
2931. It has been suggested that lists of the men registered in one district should be sent to the bureaus in other districts, and that those lists should be exhibited at police stations or railway stations? The best thing would be to send the lists to the officers in charge of the various bureaus. Then employers would be able to get men. The unfortunate part of it is that most of our labouring men register their names, and, when you look for them, they are not there. The poor unfortunate head of the bureau cannot help it.
2932. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think the erection of a dépôt in connection with the bureau would be a good thing—a place where men could camp? I think that was tried in Bundaberg, and that it was not a success.
2933. Mr. Caulfeild said it was a very good thing, and that he could not work the bureau without it? He has had considerable experience, and I suppose knows what he is talking about. There is no dépôt here. If the Government could do something of that sort, it would be a very good thing.
2934. Mr. Caulfeild said that the closing of the dépôt militated against the working of the bureau? Well, he has had more experience than I have. Still there are a great many respectable men who, if they had a place where they could camp and cook something for themselves, would stop, whereas now they go away.
2935. *By Mr. Paget*: You said that your cane was taken off by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, and that it cost you 3s. 10d. per ton—How is that cost arrived at?—Were the men paid by contract? Yes.
2936. The contract was with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? Yes. The price ranged from 2s. 6d. to nearly 5s. a ton, according to the weight of cane, whether it was trashed or untrashed; whether it was old cane or stunted, the tonnage per acre, and all sorts of things.

(Gin Gin.)

MONDAY, 9 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

Mr. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman)

Mr. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

WILLIAM CRAN, Manager of the Gin Gin Central Mill, examined:

2937. *By the Chairman:* You are at present manager of the Gin Gin Central Mill? Yes; but I would like to point out that I have only been here a month.

2938. Do you know this district at all? Yes; I was eleven years at Childers.

2939. You recently came from the Proserpine? Yes, and from the Mulgrave.

2940. How long were you up there? Two years at the Mulgrave, where I was cane inspector; one year at Proserpine, and eleven years at Doolbi, near Childers.

2941. You have had a great many years' experience? Yes, getting on for thirty years.

2942. So far as Gin Gin is concerned, what area is there under sugar cultivation? 2,500 tons will be cut in the coming season.

2943. *By Mr. Paget:* The Gin Gin mill is the only one in the district? Yes; but there is the Watawa Estate, which scuds its cane to Bingera. Bingera is nearer, and that is why the Watawa cane goes to Bingera mill.

2944. *By the Chairman:* You rely on getting 2,000 tons for your mill? That is what we will cut this year.

2945. What was cut last year? Very much the same, I believe, but I was not here. I did see the books, but I really forget what quantity of cane was cut last year.

2946. Was it cut by black or white labour? It was cut by white labour.

2947. I dare say you looked at the books, so can you tell us what were the rates of pay last season, and was it cut by contract or day labour? Both ways. A good deal of it was cut both ways. I think they gave 3s. 3d. per ton for contract work, and 30s. a week and found for day labour.

2948. Have you any means of knowing what was the average tonnage of the crop? I think it was 12 tons to the acre for the whole district.

2949. *By Mr. Paget:* Was the contract price paid for trashed or untrashed cane? They do not go in for trashing cane in these frosty districts. They do not trash until after it is cut, because they say that the frost injures the cane if you trash it.

2950. Is there a difference between trashed and untrashed cane? Yes.

2951. *By the Chairman:* Have you any means of knowing what they earned by contract? I think they earned about 6s. 6d. a day.

2952. *By Mr. Paget:* And they find themselves? Yes, they find themselves.

2953. *By the Chairman:* You only employ mill hands? Yes. I have nothing to do with field work.

2954. How is it cultivated—with black or white labour? It is all white labour.

2955. There are no Pacific Islanders here except a few farming on their own account? There are no kanakas employed at cane-growing by any of the growers here at all.

2956. *By Mr. Paget:* Are there many Polynesians growing cane for the Gin Gin mill? None at all that I know of. There is only one alien, and he is a native of Ceylon.

2957. *By the Chairman:* Can you tell us about the labour employed? They are very fortunately situated in this district, as they have a fine class of men here. The sons of these men are all good men, and they take the lead. These other fellows have to follow their lead, and if they do not keep up to them they are got rid of.

2958. *By Mr. Paget:* It is mostly family labour? Yes.

2959. *By the Chairman:* Do you know what they pay for field work, such as chipping, and cleaning, and so on? Yes; they get from 15s. to £1 a week.

2960. And rations? Yes.

2961. Have you any idea whether there is likely to be any scarcity of labour in the next crushing season? There is not, I think, if the employers only keep their heads on.

2962. What do you mean by that? They have been holding meetings, and talking about reducing the wages to 27s. 6d. a week.

2963. Who have been talking like this? The farmers have. I told them it was a silly thing to do, as the men would only go somewhere else. There are three kinds of men here—the good man, the waster, and the poor fellow who is willing to learn but does not know how. You want to keep the men here if you can.

2964. *By Mr. Paget:* You say there are a lot of men who do not know how to do the work? Yes. There is an art in cane-cutting. You will see one man use his knife like a tomahawk, and then you will see others who will use their knife like a billiard cue. Well, the latter class do more work and better work. The man who does not know how to cut cane, but is willing to learn, will soon get to know all about it, but he has to learn to cut the cane first. I think you could get children to do the cutting, but the work comes in when the cane has to be carried and loaded on the tram.

2965. The loading is the heavy work? Yes; that is really where the heavy field work comes in. I guarantee I can go to the fifth form at the school and get boys from that form who will cut any cane, but I would not like to ask them to put it on their shoulders and carry it to the tramway. That is where the work comes in.

2966. The loading is a necessary part of the operation? Certainly. A lot of that difficulty is going to be got over by the use of sledges and tripod derricks.

2967. *By the Chairman:* How will they do that? Most men make sledges, put a sling on to the sledge, and load it. The sling is then latched to the tripod derrick.

2968. And hoisted on to the derrick at once? Yes, or into the truck. Three sledges make a load.

2969. What do they make the sledges with? A couple of pieces of hardwood bevelled at the end, with boards across, and four uprights. That is going to solve a lot of the labour difficulty so far as the white men are concerned.

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2970. What would be the cost of a sledge like that? Practically nothing, as you could make it yourself.
2971. Would you want one horse or two horses? You will require two horses in the morning when the grass is dewy, but later on in the day you will only want one horse, as it is just like glass to go over then.
2972. What load will a horse take? 6 cwt. or 7 cwt. in the early part of the day, and probably 8 cwt. or 10 cwt. later on in the day.
2973. Then it would not require a man of much physical ability to cut cane? Not at all.
2974. That is if that system were introduced? Yes; the whole thing is perfectly simple.
2975. Are the farmers increasing their area? Very much.
2976. Have you any idea what the increase is, or what was planted last season? No; I do not know that.
2977. You have not been here long enough for that? No. If I had known you wanted this information I would have brought the secretary in with these particulars. I can talk more about Proserpine and Mulgrave than about Gin Gin.
2978. Well, the sergeant here has made up the return, and he says the total yield was 1,904 tons—you will accept that? Certainly.
2979. Well, now, would these young men come and work for other people? Yes, they would work at the mill if they were asked.
2980. After they have cut their own cane, if labour is wanted at the Isis, would they go there to work? No; they are a better class of men, and they would not do that.
2981. They consider themselves above the ordinary labourer? Yes.
2982. They could otherwise use their labour profitably? Yes. There are a number of young men in this district living with their parents. You would be surprised to see them.
2983. They are all natives? Yes; and they are a very fine lot of young men.
2984. They do not waste too much time in public-houses? No, they do not.
2985. *By Mr. Paget:* Do they anticipate settling down and marrying by and by? There is plenty of scope for them to go ahead.
2986. Can they get good land? Yes; if it is not here it is elsewhere.
2987. Within a reasonable reach of their present homes? That I am not prepared to say.
2988. *By the Chairman:* A large proportion of the land mortgaged to your mill is under cultivation? Yes.
2989. Is there much land fit for cane cultivation that is not yet taken up? There is some, but it is patchy. From what I have seen it would be difficult to get a piece to suit the requirements of these young men.
2990. With regard to the cane-growers identified with the mill, are they still going ahead? Most decidedly. That is apparent every where.
2991. They are increasing their cultivation area? Yes; that is the case everywhere.
2992. *By Mr. Paget:* The areas not under cultivation I presume are used for paddocking? Some of it is standing scrub yet.
2993. Well, the land other than standing scrub is used for pastoral purposes? That is so; but there is not a great deal used for paddocking. The land that is used for paddocking they do not consider good enough for cane-growing.
2994. The returns show that there is a large area not under cultivation? It is not fit to come under cultivation.
2995. *By Mr. Nielson:* There is no hurry for settling more labour here? No.
2996. Is there any land about here within a reasonable distance of the railway that would be available for close settlement—Are there any reserves that should be retained for close settlement in future? I do not know.
2997. You would not know as much about that as the other people? No; I am a stranger here.
2998. *By the Chairman:* You know there is a Labour Bureau here? Yes.
2999. But at the present time you have not of necessity had recourse to it? No.
3000. In your opinion, would a properly organised Labour Bureau be of use to farmers to get a supply of labour if they wanted it; you know how they work—a man who wants work will register his name, and the employer sends in a list of the number of men he requires? Well, I think they are like myself, and they like to see the man before they engage him.
3001. They could do that if the man registered for work, and the sergeant would be able to let you know the men he had? That would be all right if you had the bureau here; but I thought you referred to Bundaberg.
3002. No; I meant that it should be carried out here in Gin Gin? Well, the system is a good one.
3003. Last year there were a good number of men walking about, but this year the contrary is the case? Yes.
3004. *By Mr. Paget:* Can you say how many extra men over and above the settlers' sons are required for the harvesting during the coming season; have you any knowledge of that? No.
3005. You could not tell from inquiries? No; some of the farmers here would be able to tell you that, but I am not prepared to tell you.
3006. *By the Chairman:* You said you were for some time on the Proserpine? Yes; one year.
3007. Can you tell us anything that would be useful to us, such as the conditions as regards the labour, especially at the Proserpine and Mulgrave? Labour is much more easily obtained here than at those places in the North.
3008. The conditions at Proserpine and the Mulgrave are the same? Proserpine is rather better situated.
3009. Where does the labour come from to Proserpine? It comes from Mackay, on the way to Bowen.
3010. Was there any scarcity of labour there? No, there were plenty of good men.
3011. The men were fair average men? Yes, they were good men if you kept them away from the hotels.
3012. There are three hotels at Proserpine? Four.
3013. And what is the size of the place? It is not as big as this place.
3014. *By Mr. Nielson:* There is one hotel right up against the mill yard? Yes, it is right against the gates.
3015. *By Mr. Paget:* They are all close to the mill? Yes, that is the trouble,

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3016. *By the Chairman:* What wages do they pay there? 30s. a week and found.
3017. Is that for mill work? No; for field work during the crushing season. During the off season they pay 20s. a week. In the mill they pay £1 a week.
3018. *By Mr. Paget:* 20s. a week is the ordinary wage in the off season? Yes, and I do not think any self-respecting man would work for less. I do not think a good man would take 19s. 6d. if you offered it to him—he wants his £1.
3019. The industry can afford to pay that? Yes.
3020. That is with the bonus? Yes, just now.
3021. *By the Chairman:* In the time you were at the Proserpine what was the average tonnage of cane? 12 tons to the acre.
3022. *By Mr. Paget:* You made about 4,000 tons of sugar there last year? Oh, no.
3023. *By the Chairman:* What greater percentage of sugar would you expect to get from 12 tons of cane at the Proserpine than here? Of course this is a very bad place. The juice is horrible here.
3024. *By Mr. Paget:* How many tons of cane does it take to make a ton of sugar at the Proserpine and here? At the Proserpine in 1904 it took 862 tons of cane, and at Gin (Gin 11·07 tons for 88 per cent. net titre
3025. *By the Chairman:* Had you plenty of labour at the Proserpine? Yes.
3026. So far as you know the conditions, there is no danger of a shortage there this year? No.
3027. You were two years at the Mulgrave? That is where the trouble will be—the Mulgrave and the Mossman.
3028. Most of the properties at the Mulgrave have until recently been worked with black labour? There was only one white gang when I was there, working for Mr. Claude Moller.
3029. Do you know what wages he paid? Five shillings a ton. He gave them the whole of the bonus to do it. They were supposed to have gone round the field and trashed it before cutting it.
3030. Do you know how they stood the work? They were most excellent men. They made 10s. a day clear of all expenses. Of course they were picked men.
3031. *By Mr. Paget:* Was that not a party of farmers' sons from the South? No; they were local men.
3032. *By the Chairman:* Did they complain about the climate? No. They lived well. They had a professional cook, to whom they paid £2 a week, and they had five meals a day.
3033. That would be a very important factor? One of the most important factors. They set out with their minds made up to carry out the job successfully. They only complained of the carrying—the cutting is nothing. The Goro cane is almost exclusively grown there now, and it has got a nasty, hairy stuff on it which gives the men cane itch.
3034. It was not so much the arduous work of loading itself? They complain of the loading too, but a great deal of that will be done away with by the use of these cane sledges.
3035. Are they not apt to cut up the fields? No; they slide over the surface. We used them largely at the Proserpine, and that will solve a lot of the trouble. You will get some interesting figures about it when you get to Geraldton. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company have them all ready for you, of what two ordinary men picked up in the street can do.
3036. Do you know of any instance of white men at the Mulgrave cultivating the cane? No.
3037. Taking the climate into consideration, is there any reason why, if a man can do the one class of work, he should not do the other? Not if you can get decent men.
3038. Men who keep moderately sober? Yes. A man who wants to do it.
3039. *By Mr. Paget:* What tonnage of cane did those men cut? 3,000 odd tons.
3040. During what months did they work? Mr. Draper, the managing director, wanted to test the matter too, and we were told to give them every possible show, so we started about the end of June and worked right up till Christmas.
3041. *By the Chairman:* That was in 1903? Yes, and they took it on again in 1904 and 1905.
3042. One reads in the Press a good deal about the sweltering heat—how is it in that climate? It is pretty bad.
3043. But it is not intolerable? You get accustomed to it. I thought I should have died the first year I arrived in March, and I would have given anything to get out of it, but I got accustomed to it.
3044. The discomfort would be aggravated amongst the cane brakes? It is hot, there is no doubt.
3045. Have you ever seen men tank-sinking? Yes.
3046. Is it worse in the cane fields at the Mulgrave than tank-sinking? I do not think it is.
3047. *By Mr. Paget:* Is there not a difference between the humid atmosphere of Cairns and the dry west, where these tanks are excavated? That is the trouble. It is the heat from the ground that troubles you on the coast. It has a depressing effect upon you. You do not seem to be able to breathe freely, but you become acclimatised.
3048. *By the Chairman:* Can the men rest at night? Yes. The two years I was there I did not find any difficulty about the nights at all. I had heard terrible tales about it, but I did not experience it.
3049. As a matter of fact, sobriety enters largely into the question? That is the whole trouble.
3050. Do men suffer much from fever? No. There was none when I was there that I heard of.
3051. Are there any other prevalent minor ailments there? Not that I know of.
3052. Then it is a fairly healthy climate? The Mulgrave is. I think it is a bit ahead of Cairns itself. I should not like to live at Cairns; but I do not think there is a sultrier spot on God's earth than Flinders street, Townsville. I would not like to cut cane there. The Mulgrave has a very nice climate.
3053. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think it would assist the industry in the North if a proper Labour Bureau were established, so that the overplus of men in the South could have ready communication with the places requiring labour? Yes, certainly I do. That would be very advantageous in more ways than one. If these fellows knew that there was work elsewhere they would not be so troublesome.
3054. *By the Chairman:* It would save them walking to places where they could not get work? Yes, it would save them that trouble.
3055. The Labour Bureau would circulate the news of the labour market, and men would know where they would get work? It is an excellent idea.
3056. *By Mr. Nielson:* What proportion of cane was harvested by white labour at Proserpine last year? There are Japs and kanakas growing cane up there, and I suppose that 15 per cent. of the total crop was grown by aliens there—that is, grown and harvested.

- W. Cran. 3057. Was all the rest harvested by white men? Yes.
- 9 April, 1906. 3058. Do you think that the continuance of the present bonus system is essential to the continuance of the industry? Most decidedly.
3059. *By the Chairman*: You think the industry would not live without it at present? Not so far as I can see. That is the saving clause.
3060. In the course of our questions have we missed any subjects on which you could enlighten us or is there anything that you think would be useful to us that we have not touched on? No; except that at Mulgrave the men are getting £1 per ton for their cane, and the men in this district get only 10s. per ton. So a man can put up with a lot of the heat and trouble of the North to get those big prices.
3061. *By the Chairman*: What was paid at the Gin Gin mill last year? 10s. per ton, I understand; but some of these men here can tell you.
- A Farmer*: We got 10s. 6d. and 11s. per ton for our cane here last year.
3062. *By the Chairman*: It is better cane at the Mulgrave? Yes; the cane on the Mulgrave has the most beautiful juice. The purest juice of any cane comes from the Mulgrave. There are no frosts there either.
3063. There is no frost and there is less waste in the crop? Yes. It contains beautiful pure juice, and it averages 15 or 16 per cent. of sugar.
3064. Altogether, the conditions are much better in the North? Yes, they are. That is the home of the sugar-cane. There is no doubt about that.
3065. That being so, do you think that field labour can be paid better up there than here? Yes, most certainly.
3066. And they can afford to pay a better rate than the growers down here? Certainly.
3067. Can you suggest the average yield per acre up there? In 1904 the average on the Mulgrave was 17½ tons to the acre, and in 1903 the average was 16½ tons per acre. That is a beautiful average to get. When you come down to this district you find the average is down to 11 and 12 tons to the acre.
3068. *By Mr. Nielson*: Practically they grow 2 tons of sugar in Mulgrave for 1 ton grown here? That is so.
3069. *By the Chairman*: You have no doubt that field labour can be better paid for up there? That must of necessity be so when they get £1 per ton for their cane. Then the other expenses are less in the North than they are here. The cane grows so rapidly there, and there is not the same expense in connection with the cultivation.
3070. *By Mr. Paget*: But the weeds grow rapidly also? No, the cane smothers the weeds very quickly.
3071. *By Mr. Nielson*: On the whole, is the cultivation generally in the North as good as it is in the Bundaberg and Isis districts? It was on the Mulgrave. Now that white labour is so much talked about, I think people will plant their cane closer together, and have more stools per acre than under the block system, and the weeds will not get such a chance to grow.
3072. *By Mr. Paget*: No more will the cane? Oh, yes, it will.

FREDERICK APPLIN, Cane Farmer, examined:

- F. Applin. 3073. *By the Chairman*: You are a canegrower? I am a cane farmer to the Gin Gin mill.
- 9 April, 1906. 3074. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many acres have you under cane? About 90 acres.
3075. How many acres did you cut last year? 74 acres.
3076. What tonnage did you get? 1,612 tons.
3077. You are on what they call low land? Some of it is low and some high.
3078. How was your cane cut—by white or black labour? It was cut by white labour.
3079. How many seasons have you cut by white labour now? Four seasons.
3080. Was it cut by contract or weekly wages? By weekly wages, mostly; but one year I cut half of it by contract.
3081. What wages did you pay? 27s. 6d. a week, and a bonus of 2s. 6d. a week.
3082. How many men did you have cutting, on the average? I suppose I had thirteen on the average—that is, cutting and loading.
3083. Did they stay with you all through the season? Yes; I only had one man who did not draw his bonus.
3084. Were they all local residents? No.
3085. Where did they come from? Degilbo, Bundaberg, and New South Wales, and there were four local men.
3086. Had they been with you in previous years? They had been with me for three years, nearly all the same men.
3087. On the whole, what is your experience of working cane by white labour—Satisfactory? Very, so far as I am concerned.
3088. Do you employ white men in the slack season? Yes; all through the slack season. I have four men working now.
3089. What wages did you pay for white labour? £1 in the slack season.
3090. And found? Yes.
3091. Are the men satisfied with that? Yes; very well satisfied.
3092. Are they limited at all? The men board with me.
3093. *By Mr. Nielson*: What do you think the average farmer can afford to pay in the slack season? £1 a week and found. I do not think he could afford to pay more than £1.
3094. Do you think he could afford to pay 30s. a week and tucker in the crushing season to the average worker? No, I do not think they could on some farms. Some of the farmers here have high land, and they cannot afford to pay 30s. Some of their land is very poor.
3095. And they get small crops? Yes.
3096. Will they get labour at less than that, and if so how much less? They can get labour at 25s. I have plenty of labour waiting now—in fact, more than I want.
3097. Have you increased your area under cultivation in the last three years? This year I have made an increase. The new land has to be ploughed up a lot at first.

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3098. How much new land have you this year? Twenty acres.
 3099. That is beside replanting? I do not want to replant. I am giving it a year's spell.
 3100. Have you any difficulty in finding men when you want them? No difficulty whatever.
 3101. Do you think there will be plenty of labour in this district this season? I think so if we will give a fair wage. That is the only trouble that is standing in the way.
 3102. Do not the other farmers give a fair wage? The majority of them give from 25s. to 27s. a week, and found.
 3103. Do you think you will find plenty of labour at those prices? I think they will have plenty of labour if the food is good. There were a few complaints last year about the quality of the food.
 3104. At your place? No, there was no complaint whatever at my place.
 3105. You mean in the district? Yes. I heard these rumours. I think there will be plenty of labour this year.
 3106. *By the Chairman:* If the men are well fed it will be all right? Yes, we will have plenty of labour then.
 3107. *By Mr. Paget:* They are a fairly good class of labour you get here? Yes, so far as my experience goes. I have had no trouble whatever. For the last four years I have been here only three men have left me.
 3108. *By the Chairman:* What is the nearest public-house to your place? At the central mill, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles away. That is the drawback.
 3109. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you been growing cane for many years? Yes; ever since the central mill was built.
 3110. That was in 1893 or 1894? Yes. I have been the largest grower since the mill started up to the present time.
 3111. Before the year 1901, were you growing cane with white or coloured labour? With coloured labour.
 3112. Pacific Islanders? Yes. I always had a few whites, too, to do my cultivation.
 3113. In connection with hoeing, trashing, cutting, and loading? We did not trash—cutting and loading. The cutting was mostly done by Pacific Islanders; the loading was mostly done by white people.
 3114. Since the new conditions came into existence with respect to the bonus, you have employed all white labour? Yes.
 3115. So you think it is necessary for the continuance of white labour that the bonus should be continued? I think so.
 3116. Could you pay the wages you do if there were no bonus? Not the wages I am paying at the present time.
 3117. At the end of this year some 6,000 labourers in the industry have to leave the State—Do you anticipate any shortage of labour in consequence of the withdrawal of that amount of labour? I have no fear of a shortage of labour, but I do not think there is labour enough in the district when all the islanders are taken away.
 3118. Mr. Caulfield says there are probably 1,100 islanders in the Bundaberg district, and that will leave places for an additional number of white men—Do you anticipate any serious deficiency in your labour supply? For my part, I can get plenty of labour.
 3119. *By the Chairman:* When you want labour, do you ever make use of the Government Labour Bureau? Never.
 3120. Do you know that there is a Labour Bureau? Not in Gin Gin.
 3121. Well, there is one; and I dare say it will be more active in the future? I have never had any occasion. I had men coming from New South Wales a fortnight ago, and another is to come.
 3122. Did they write to you? They wrote and asked me if they could come back.
 3123. What part of New South Wales? Sydney.
 3124. *By Mr. Paget:* Are they men who have been in the habit of going to the Northern Rivers during the crushing season? Until they came to me two years ago they had never cut cane in their lives.

GEORGE HANDLEY, Cane Farmer, examined:

3125. *By the Chairman:* Are you a farmer? Yes.
 3126. What area have you? Sixty-two acres under cane.
 3127. How much did you cut last year? Fifty acres.
 3128. Have you planted any fresh area this year? I am replanting 7 acres out of the other 12.
 3129. You have not put in any new ground? No.
 3130. Do you contemplate doing it in the future? No.
 3131. Have you any more ground that you can plant cane in? No.
 3132. What is the total area of your farm? 80 acres.
 3133. What tonnage of cane did you get from the 50 acres you cut? 633 tons.
 3134. Did you cut it by white labour? Yes.
 3135. *By day labour or by contract?* I let the work by contract for the cutting, and did the loading myself.
 3136. What did you pay for the cutting? 2s. a ton.
 3137. *By Mr. Paget:* Did the men who cut the cane act in co-operation, or did one man take the contract? One man took the contract and employed the labour.
 3138. *By the Chairman:* Do you know what those men made out of it? They made very good wages, and were very well satisfied.
 3139. Do you know what the wages were? No; but they were over 6s. a day.
 3140. Were they local men? Yes. There were men from the Bundaberg district. The same man who took the contract has not applied this year, but two who were working for him have already applied for my cane at the same price.
 3141. What do you pay for field work? 25s. a week and found.
 3142. All the year round? No; £1 a week and found for good men.
 3143. And 25s. a week and found during the cutting season? Yes, without loading.
 3144. Have you any anxiety about getting labour in the future? Yes. I am very much afraid we shall not be able to get much labour. We have always been troubled at Watawa with a shortage of labour.

G. Handley,

9 April, 1906.

- G. Handley. 3145. You are not in the same direction as Mr. Applin? No. I am on the Watawa Estate, 2½ miles from here.
- 9 April, 1906. 3146. You are a tenant of Mr. Gibson's? Yes.
3147. There is plenty of labour of a sort? Yes; every year we have men coming here who are not worth their food.
3148. Are you getting into communication with districts where there is surplus labour to let your wants be known? Yes. We came from Laidley. I was one of the first who came here from Laidley twelve years ago, and we are always in communication with Laidley.
3149. Have you an association? We have just formed a Canegrowers' Association.
3150. Are they taking action? Not to provide labour.
3151. Should that not be one of the functions of the association? We have fixed a scale of wages as near as it was possible to do.
3152. *By Mr. Paget:* What are the rates you have fixed? Our delegates were down in Bundaberg, where the rates fixed were 25s. a week and found for ordinary labourers; 6s. a day for canecutters; old men and men otherwise incapacitated for a full day's work, we have arranged to give from 12s. to 20s. a week.
3153. *By the Chairman:* Is there any surplus labour in the Laidley district? We have already some men engaged, and that has been the difficulty for our association in striking a permanent rate.
3154. When once the rate of wages is fixed, have you any doubt, when it is known in the South, that you will have labourers coming to you? No. Some of the farmers in the Laidley district are complaining that our rates are going to laid them in a hole when canecutting comes on.
3155. What rates have you fixed? 25s. a week and found. Working down there, men are offered 12s. a week and found.
3156. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do not the Laidley men go to the Downs in the wheat harvest? Of course.
3157. *By the Chairman:* What do they earn in the wheat harvesting? I think they get 6s. a day. Of course, they work sixteen hours a day in the thrashing.
3158. What hours do you work here? Nine hours a day, and eight on Saturday—fifty-three hours a week.
3159. Why should you not work as many hours as in the wheat harvest? Men say they cannot bear the strain.
3160. Is the work much heavier? Much heavier. Men often get run down in three months, and they will not stop under any consideration when the heat of summer comes on. There are men here who would not stop if you offered them £2 a week and found.
3161. *By Mr. Paget:* I understood you to say you will have more difficulty in getting men for the harvesting in the middle of October than you would between June and October? Yes.
3162. *By the Chairman:* And there are men earning the same money down there, only they have to work longer hours? Yes; they get 6s. a day for harvesting, and work sixteen hours a day against our nine hours a day.
3163. *By Mr. Nielson:* They work twelve hours a day when they work double shifts? I have a man in my employ now who came from there, and he tells me that they ask the hands there to work sixteen hours a day when they work all night. They start at 4 o'clock in the morning, and worked until 8 o'clock at night.
3164. *By the Chairman:* In the same shift? Yes, in one shift.
3165. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do they work the mill all through the night? Yes.
3166. *By the Chairman:* And would not a man sooner work nine hours a day for the same money as was paid for sixteen hours? Yes. I have a man working for me, and he says he would not go back to the Downs on any consideration. I can get men in preference to the Downs. I could get twenty men to-morrow from Laidley.
3167. *By Mr. Nielson:* What is their fear then? The fear is that if I can get them there are no more for the others.
3168. And they look at it in that way? Yes; they think they will have great difficulty in getting labour if we take them away from the Downs for our harvest, and they tell us about it.
3169. *By the Chairman:* I suppose you are in sympathy with your old acquaintances on the Downs? Exactly. There will be a shortage for somebody.
3170. *By Mr. Nielson:* What we are here for is to inquire into the shortage in the sugar labour; the wheat labour does not affect us at all? We have always been short here.
3171. *By the Chairman:* The terms you offer are sufficient to get the people to leave Laidley to come here? Yes.
3172. That is all that concerns you? Yes.
3173. *By Mr. Nielson:* That is all you have to look after? Yes.
3174. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything more you could tell us that will be of use to us? I do not think there is anything more. I may say that I represent a different part of the district to some of the other farmers. The Gin Gin Central Mill generally starts work three or four weeks before Gibson and Howe's mill. There are about 300 men who come round here six weeks or two months before crushing starts, and as soon as the Gin Gin mill starts operations they have the pick of the labour, and take what they want. That is the difference between our case and that of the Gin Gin mill. We started a month after the Gin Gin mill last year, and that made it difficult for us to get labour. They have a good supply of men, and naturally they choose the best that are offering, and we are left to pick from the men who are left.
3175. Can you suggest any course by which that difficulty would be overcome? No; we have never availed ourselves of the Labour Bureau.
3176. *By Mr. Nielson:* Suppose that Bingera started earlier, would that improve matters? No, and we would then be taking from the Gin Gin mill. The same difficulty would exist in the district; only it would be shifted off our shoulders on to somebody else's. I have paid the fares of men to come down here, and after I have employed them for a time I find that they know nothing about sugar. I have paid their fares to bring them here.
3177. How many tons did you send away? We sent away from 180 to 200 tons a day.
3178. Right through the season? Yes.

3179. How many men would you require to send that away in addition to your permanent staff? We would require 150 men. G. Handley.

3180. Would you require 150 men extra to send away a total of 180 tons a day? Yes.

3181. Would you only average from 1 to 1½ tons per man per day? Yes, sometimes less than that. Our averages have been very poor for the last six years. Our average of 8 tons to the acre last year was the highest we had for the past eight years.

3182. *By Mr. Paget*: Did (it) suffer severely from the drought? Yes. That was the cause of the low average.

3183. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did you say it will take 150 men, in addition to your tenants, to take off 180 tons of cane a day? Yes, it will take that many this season. Gibson and Howes have leased the whole of their lands out, and I dare say we shall be requiring some more hands.

3184. *By the Chairman*: In that case you will expect to send away more than 180 tons of cane a day? We will require 150 men to send that amount away. The men averaged 9s. a day on that.

3185. *By Mr. Nielson*: What tonnage did they average when they were getting 9s? Two tons a day,

3186. Then the 150 men would be earning 30s. a week? No, they do not all do that.

3187. Even if you leave out the permanent hands and the tenants—I am sure if you look at it you will see that you are over the mark with regard to the number of men you will require? I may be, but not much.

3188. *By Mr. Paget*: Is Watawa all scrub? Yes, all scrub.

3189. Is it hilly? A very great proportion of it is hilly and high ground.

3190. How do you get the cane off that? By wagons. It is not so hilly that we cannot get a wagon up to it.

3191. Then the cane is loaded on to the trucks by derricks? We have the same gauge as the Government railway at Bingera, and the Government rolling-stock can run on to our lands.

3192. You load it in slings? Yes, and lift it out of the wagons into the trucks.

3193. Is the country so hilly that the cane has to be carried far to the wagon? No. We can always draw in between two rows of cane. Our average is far below the Gin Gin mill, and it is far lower than any other place in the Bundaberg district.

3194. You averaged 11 tons last year? Yes, but two years ago I only got 32 tons off 62 acres.

3195. *By the Chairman*: Is your rent calculated on a royalty? Yes.

3196. Have you any objection to tell us what it is? We pay a royalty of 1s. per ton. We get 11s. per ton for our cane, and 1s. per ton royalty is taken out of it.

3197. Did you ever hear of anyone in the Bundaberg district demanding a higher royalty than 1s.? Yes.

3198. How much? We have one tenant now, on land adjoining Messrs. Gibson and Howes' estate, who is paying 1s. 6d.

3199. Have you ever heard of 1s. being paid? No.

3200. Or demanded? No. There is another man who is paying 2s., I think; but the cane was planted in that case. He took over the farm in full working order, while we took over ordinary scrub.

3201. *By Mr. Paget*: The conditions are entirely different. The Commission were told the other day that since the granting of the bonus in certain instances the royalty had been increased? No; 1s. a ton is the recognised rate for unimproved land.

3202. Have the tenants on Watawa the right of purchase? No; but Messrs. Gibson and Howes have offered us that right if we make application. Ever since we have been here they have always held out to us the opportunity of making our farms freehold, but as yet, with one exception, nobody has applied for it.

3203. In the event of any farmer expressing a desire to make his land freehold, would the royalty be counted year by year as part of the purchase money? Yes.

3204. *By Mr. Nielson*: How is it that none of you have applied for the right to purchase? We have thought we would take the best out of the land for the time we had it leased, and perhaps we would rather take some new land if we wanted a freehold; but lately a few have altered their minds on the subject, and they are contemplating asking for a purchasing clause.

3205. *By Mr. Paget*: Do any of the farmers on Watawa manure? A few have manured this year for the first time.

3206. *By Mr. Nielson*: If you had a purchasing clause you would not be any better off than you are now? I do not think it would be any advantage to us. In fact, it would have been a drawback up to the present time.

3207. Why? Naturally we would have been required to carry our burdens more than we have done.

3208. *By the Chairman*: What do you mean by that? Well, Messrs. Gibson and Howes have been very good to us in granting concessions during the drought. Many of the farmers' sons have gone away, and many more would have gone away but for those concessions.

3209. *By Mr. Paget*: As a matter of fact, they financed you? Yes. With the exception of about three farmers, they have financed us through our difficulties; and they have helped us with labour also when we have fallen short.

EZRA CRAMPTON, Cane Farmer, examined:

3210. *By the Chairman*: Where is your residence? At Currajong Creek, Gin Gin.

3211. What is the area of your farm? 193 acres.

3212. How much of it is under cane? At present 33 acres.

3213. How much cane did you cut last year? I cut 11 acres last year.

3214. For what tonnage? I think on an average of between 12 and 13 tons to the acre.

3215. Do you know how much you got altogether? Yes; 135 tons.

3216. Did you cut it by day labour or by contract? Day labour.

3217. What wage? 25s. a week and found.

3218. Did you plant any new ground this year? Yes.

3219. How much? 15 acres newly planted this time.

3220. In addition to the 33 acres? No; including the 33.

3221. You have a prospect of increasing your area after next year? Yes; considerably. I have a lot of standing scrub; I have over 100 acres of standing scrub to clear.

E. Crampton.

9 April, 1906.

E. Crampton. 3222. You have 100 acres that will grow cane? Yes. I have 140 acres on the holding that will grow cane.

9 April, 1906. 3223. Where did you get your labour from? From the district.

3224. From the local men who work for you? Yes; from the local men.

3225. The farmers' sons? Yes; men who have got farms of their own.

3226. And they are willing to accept work? Yes.

3227. Are they settled here? Yes, in the district.

3228. I have you any anxiety as to getting labour this year? Not the least. If we are to be guided by our last year's supply we shall get plenty. We have no trouble getting men.

3229. Does the labour come to you here, or do you have to write for it? We never have to write for it.

3230. You feel quite easy as to the future? Yes; I feel quite easy.

3231. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think it would assist the employer, and the men looking for work, if you had a properly organised Labour Bureau here? I do not think it would do any harm. It would be beneficial to the district.

3232. *By the Chairman*: Have you anything more you would like to say to us? Nothing more.

3233. I do not want you to go away and say, "if I were only asked such and such a question I could have said so-and-so"; so if you have anything further to add you had better say it now? There are a great many who think there will be a shortage of labour when the kanakas go, but I think it will make no difference at all to the Gin Gin district. I do not think there are more than twenty kanakas in Gin Gin at present. Most of them are ticket men, and I do not know whether the Act will send them away or not.

3234. *By Mr. Nielson*: No; the Act will not send them away? I thought not.

3235. *By the Chairman*: You do not employ kanakas? No.

3236. *By Mr. Paget*: The kanakas who are here are mostly settled on the land? The majority are growing cane for themselves for the Gin Gin mill. There are a few who come about and get casual work, and are not settled here at all. I should like to say something about the land that could be made useful for settlement in the district. There are thousands of acres of land within 10 miles of the Gin Gin Central Mill, and most of it is Government land.

3237. *By the Chairman*: Is it within 10 miles? Yes, and it extends beyond that a long way. It is good agricultural land; in fact, a lot of it is scrub land.

3238. *By Mr. Paget*: Is it open for selection? No, it is not open for selection.

3239. *By the Chairman*: Is it held under occupation license? Yes.

3240. *By Mr. Paget*: Cannot an occupation license be cancelled by giving six months' notice? Oh, yes. They only want railway facilities there to make it really good land.

3241. *By the Chairman*: If it is only 10 miles from Gin Gin, that is not a great distance; how far is it from the nearest mill? It is 10 miles from the Gin Gin Central Mill, but the mill is 10 miles from the railway station, so that this land is 20 miles from the railway station here.

3242. It is 20 miles from here then? Yes; but there is a tramline running from here to the Central mill.

3243. Some of it is good land? Most of it is as good land as there is in the district.

3244. It would be good dairying land? Yes; good dairying and agricultural land.

3245. If it were thrown open, in what area should it be offered so that the small man would be able to do something with it? I think not less than 160 acres.

3246. Could he do something good on that? Yes.

3247. Homesteads, or how? Homesteads.

3248. Do you think it would be taken up if it were available? Yes; if there were railway facilities.

3249. But it is only 10 miles from the tramline? But the tramline belongs to the Central mill.

3250. The tramline could be made available in the off season at any rate, and it would be within 10 miles of the railway station? Yes.

3251. And the land would be taken up? Yes.

3252. *By the Chairman*: Do you think that it would be any advantage to you to have men settled there dairying? I think it would be an advantage. If we could get closer settlement, we would have a lot of extra labour available.

3253. Do you know the name of the parishes here? Booyal, Perry, and Tenningering.

JOHN POULMAN, Cane Farmer, living at Watawa, examined:

J. Pohlman. 3254. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your farm? 83 acres.

3255. How much of that is under cane? 78 acres at the present time.

9 April, 1906. 3256. How much did you cut last year? About 70 acres.

3257. Do you hold any leased land? Yes, from Gibson and Howes.

3258. You pay a royalty? Yes, 1s. per ton.

3259. What did you get for the cane on the trucks? 10s. and 11s. per ton, and the 1s. was deducted for royalty. That left us 10s. clear.

3260. *By Mr. Paget*: That 1s. per ton was rent; if you owned the land, you would be getting 11s. per ton for your cane? Yes, that is the rate.

3261. *By the Chairman*: What tonnage did you get from the 70 acres? I think I got 840 tons.

3262. Did you cut it by contract or day labour? Day labour.

3263. What wages? I paid 6s. a day, or 25s. a week and tucker.

3264. Had you any difficulty in getting what labour you wanted? No, because I get the labour of the sons of some of my neighbours, and work it that way.

3265. You were always well supplied with local labour? Yes.

3266. Do you anticipate any difficulty in the future, say next year? I think there will be.

3267. Will not the same class of labour be available? Yes; but there will be much more of it wanted, especially at Watawa.

3268. You expect heavier crops? Yes; Gibson and Howes lease all their land, and it will all be cut by white labour.

3269. Do you belong to any association? Yes; I belong to the association here.

3270. They have fixed a rate of wages? Yes.

J. Pohlman.

3271. You have not done anything towards inducing labour to come here? Not so far.
 3272. Would it not be wise to correspond with the farming districts in the South, and induce some of the young men to come up here? Yes; but it is early to do that yet. I had some men last year from the Downs. 9 April, 1906.

3273. And you think you will get them again? Their names are on my books to return, but if they have got a good billet now it will be a long way for them to travel up here, and they will not return.

3274. Do you know whether the men prefer the cane harvest to the wheat harvest? Yes; the men prefer the cane harvest to wheat because the hours on the cane field are shorter.

3275. The hours are longer on the Downs? Yes; they work from 8 a.m. till 8 p.m., and very often to 9 p.m. They have also to start very early in the morning in some cases, and they do not get any regular dinner hour. The men like our hours, because we are regular from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., with an hour off for dinner.

3276. You feed the men yourself? Yes; they live at the same table as myself.

3277. Are they a decent class of men? Yes; I have had some bad ones, though. I have picked up some of these travellers who are real bad.

3278. By Mr. Nielson: Bingera mill works day and night? It works both shifts in a good season.

3279. Did it do that last season? Yes.

3280. And it will do it this season? Yes.

3281. Well the heavier crops cannot affect it? Yes, they do. The mill will take up more cane.

3282. But it can only crush twenty-four hours a day? Yes; but it can crush it quicker if there is more cane.

3283. If they work up to the full capacity, it does not matter whether the crop is heavy or small; so long as it gets a full amount of cane, it will make no difference? No; certainly not.

3284. By the Chairman: Is there any land available for settlement here? Yes, plenty.

3285. Do you think there are likely to be more people settling down here? There is plenty of land for settlement, but I do not know if it is any good for sugar.

3286. Is there any dairy land? Yes.

3287. Would it be any advantage to the farmers to have people here in the dairying industry? We would have the farmers' sons here then.

3288. Have the farmers all got sons? They mostly have.

3289. By Mr. Paget: What about the single men? You will not get the single men to settle on the land.

3290. By the Chairman: There is only dairying land on which they could settle? Yes.

3291. What is the smallest area of land that would be suitable for dairying? 100 acres of anything you can get hold of would be necessary for dairying.

3292. Could you get 100 acres? Yes.

3293. By Mr. Paget: Forest land? Yes.

3294. Crown lands? They belong to the Gin Gin Estate.

3295. They are freehold? Yes.

3296. Have the owners any idea of cutting it up and subdividing it? They have subdivided it already.

3297. The Gin Gin Estate has been subdivided? Yes.

3298. Then it is open for selection now? Yes.

3299. By Mr. Nielson: The Gin Gin Estate will not sell at the price they are asking for it? I would not give the price they are asking.

3300. By the Chairman: What are they asking? From £2 to £5 10s. an acre.

3301. You could not grow cane on land at that price? No.

3302. Could you go in for dairying on that land? Yes.

3303. Could you afford to pay for land at that price? No, it is too high.

3304. Is there any Crown land open for selection? No.

3305. By Mr. Nielson: Do you know any Crown land at all that could be opened to selection, and that would be selected? No; I do not, but there might be plenty that I do not know.

3306. By Mr. Paget: Were any of these lands on the Gin Gin Estate sold? Yes; there was a good area sold, but how much I cannot say.

3307. The terms, I suppose, are pretty liberal with respect to time? I believe so; I believe they extend over twenty-four years.

3308. Has the effect of these farmers settling on the land had any appreciable effect on the labour supply of this district? Not yet.

3309. By the Chairman: The Gin Gin lands did not sell when they were offered? Some of them were sold.

3310. Would they have all been sold if they had been offered at a lower price? Certainly they would. If they had been offered at a lower price, they would have sold readily.

3311. What would you regard as a reasonable price for the lands of the estate? If they had been offered at from £2 to £2 10s. per acre, instead of £5, they would have been sold.

3312. They would have sold readily at £2 per acre? Yes.

3313. By Mr. Nielson: There is plenty of demand for land at a reasonable price in this district? Yes.

3314. Is there anything more you think it would be of use to us to know? No, nothing more.

THOMAS CHRISTIAN JENSEN, Cane Farmer, examined:

3315. By the Chairman: What are you? A cane farmer.

3316. Where do you reside? About 5 miles from Gin Gin.

3317. What is the area of your farm? 640 acres.

3318. Have you any of it under cane? 60 acres.

3319. Did you cut any last year? Yes, 54 acres; but some of it was not very good, and we simply took the best of it.

3320. What tonnage of cane did you cut? 408 tons.

3321. By Mr. Paget: About 8 tons to the acre? Yes; we had a 10-ton crop, but there was some of it inferior cane, and we simply cut the best.

3322. By the Chairman: Did you cut by contract or day labour? By day labour.

T. C. Jensen.

9 April, 1906.

- T. C. Jensen. 3323. What wages did you pay? I offered them 6s. a day, or 25s. a week and found, and they always selected the 25s. a week and found.
- 9 April, 1906. 3324. Had you any difficulty in getting men to do the work? No.
3325. Were they local men or strangers? To save local men I took a stranger occasionally; but they were mostly local men.
3326. Do you anticipate any trouble about labour this year? I cannot see any trouble ahead.
3327. Have you any more land fit for cane in your farm? Yes. It is nearly all scrub, and fit for cultivation.
3328. Are you connected with the Gin Gin Central Mill? Yes.
3329. Are you going to increase the area under cane next year? Yes, if I can manage. The drought has put me back, so that I can do very little.
3330. By Mr. Paget: Is your land mortgaged to the Gin Gin mill? Yes.
3331. By the Chairman: You say that nearly the whole 640 acres is fit for cultivation? Yes.
3332. Can you not sublet any of it? Nobody would touch land about this part, because the drought has fallen so heavily upon the district. Then the men connected with the central mill are labouring under great disabilities. The high lands are practically forced out of cultivation.
3333. Why? On account of the great difference in the density of the cane. The low lands produce a heavier tonnage; but the high lands give a very high density but a smaller tonnage.
3334. Is that not to a great extent because of the dry season—Would it not be different in a normal season? Yes, a fair season would ameliorate it to a certain extent, but we have had nothing but dry seasons since 1898.
3335. You have had some rain this year? Yes. There is a fair prospect this year. Owing to the dry weather last year a tremendous amount of rats died out.
3336. What do you pay for labour for cane cultivation during the year? £1 a week in the slack season, and 25s. a week during the crushing season.
3337. Do you think you will get plenty of men at that price? Yes. We could afford to pay more if we got our cane dealt with a little more scientifically, and not by this clumsy method of paying for the weight of cane. There is very little in that. It is sugar we should go by.
3338. By Mr. Paget: Do you advocate a system of payment by analysis? Yes.
3339. I presume you are on high land? Yes.
3340. By the Chairman: If your cane was on the low land you would want it paid for by weight? I am also a dairy farmer, and if I get a lower percentage of cream I get paid accordingly, and that is the proper way.
3341. By Mr. Nielson: In the Isis they object to the analysis system altogether? Because they had to throw some of the very richest of their land out of cultivation. A good deal of the low lands were fenced off when they were on the density system.
3342. By the Chairman: Is there any room for expansion in connection with dairying? Yes; but I do not find it payable.
3343. By Mr. Paget: For what reason—are you too far from the railway? I am only 3 miles from the railway line; but in my experience, as soon as butter falls below 1s. a lb., I cannot pay £1 a week in wages.
3344. Have you no sons growing up? Yes, I have three sons.
3345. Is there anything more you think you can tell us? No.

ERNEST HOCKINGS, Cane Farmer, examined;

- E. Hockings. 3346. By the Chairman: What are you? A cane farmer.
- 9 April, 1906. 3347. Where is your farm? At Walla, just up from the mill.
3348. What area have you got? About 180 acres.
3349. Have you any under cane? About 70 acres.
3350. How much did you cut last year? About 40 acres for 600 tons.
3351. Did you cut it by day labour or by contract? By contract and by day labour.
3352. What did you pay for day labour? 25s. a week and keep.
3353. And for the contract work? 3s. 6d. a ton, cutting and loading once.
3354. Had you any difficulty in getting the labour you wanted? No.
3355. Were they local men? No; they were mostly South Brisbane boys.
3356. Did they work well? Some of them worked very well.
3357. Do you expect any number to return this year? Yes; I have had letters from several of them.
3358. By Mr. Paget: Are they the ones who were contracting? Yes. They were mostly Woolloongabba boys who had the contract. They were pretty wild lads, I may tell you; but they carried through the work all right.
3359. They were good workers? Fairly good workers.
3360. Your crop averaged 15 tons to the acre? About that.
3361. How many tons did the contract men cut? At first I gave 3s. 4d. a ton; but I found they could not do it at that, and I raised it to 3s. 6d.; but, as the mill closed down sooner than I expected, I put on other men to get the cane cut in time for the mill. The contract was carried through all right.
3362. By the Chairman: The 3s. 6d. a ton paid them all right? Yes.
3363. By Mr. Paget: What wages did they make at that rate? I have no idea. Of course the cane was patchy. Some blocks were very good, and others were not so good.
3364. Did they take your crop on a face? Yes, on the average.
3365. By the Chairman: And you do not anticipate any difficulty next year? Not so far as I am concerned.
3366. By Mr. Paget: Well, do you anticipate any difficulty after the end of this crushing? I think there will be a difficulty next year.
3367. Can you make any suggestion to the Commission as to how that difficulty might be met? Well, when a young fellow goes out cutting cane it takes him some time to get into it, and the question for us is, Can we get sufficient good labour in the district?
3368. By Mr. Nielson: That is what we have come to find out? Well, you are in the same boat as myself.

3369. *By the Chairman*: Would it be of any advantage to get young men settled here? Yes, it would; E. Hockings.
but I would like to know where these lands are that Mr. Crompton speaks of. The land that he refers to is mostly leasehold. 9 April, 1906.

3370. *By Mr. Paget*: Under occupation license? No. The Booyal land is taken up and the land alongside it is not worth a shilling a mile. I think that most of the land that could be taken up for close settlement is on lease for twenty or thirty years. There might be some land on Monduran.

3371. How far is Monduran from here? It is 12 or 13 miles from Gin Gin township.

3372. How far from the mill? It is right in the opposite direction, and would probably be 23 miles from the mill.

3373. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know the Perry Scrub? I do.

3374. Is there any land there fit for settlement? There is some scrub there, but I do not know if it is fit for settlement. I know several men have taken up land there, and that is as far as they have gone. Several local men have taken up land there and paid their first payments, and that is all they have seen of it. It remains there just as it was. I think a man would be pretty thick in the head to take up that land for farming.

3375. *By Mr. Paget*: Why, is it mountainous? It is not up to much.

3376. You say you carried your work through very successfully with the lads from South Brisbane? Yes.

3377. From what they have told you, do you think there is a much larger supply of that labour in Brisbane that could be availed of? I think there could be a lot more of these young men obtained down there.

3378. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would those young lads be willing to leave town and come to a district such as this? I think they would.

3379. How did they come up? Some walked, and some got up on passes.

3380. *By Mr. Paget*: You did not advance them the money for them to come up? No. I had some of the lads working for me before, and they brought others along with them on the next occasion.

3381. How many were there of them? Ten of them altogether.

3382. *By the Chairman*: What age were they? They were all boys.

3383. But they call a kauaka a "boy" if he is sixty years of age? These were all young men of twenty-four or twenty-five years of age.

3384. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do they belong to the "push"? Yes; some of them belong to the Woolloongabba "push."

3385. *By Mr. Paget*: Did they behave themselves? Yes.

3386. *By Mr. Nielson*: If you can transfer these young chaps into the cane fields, you will be doing a good service for Brisbane? Will they give me something for doing it?

3387. You deserve a halo for it? I was reared in South Brisbane myself, and I knew some of these men formerly.

3388. *By the Chairman*: That is the class of men we would like to get brought into the country, as it would be good for the country and good for the men themselves? Yes.

3389. Can you tell us anything else that will be of service to us? No.

3390. How far are you situated from a public-house? About $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles; it is very handy.

3391. In spite of that they worked well with you? Yes.

3392. *By Mr. Paget*: And they did not give you any trouble on Monday morning after pay day? One or two might have done so, but I got them out just the same. There were some pretty hard cases amongst them.

PHILIP FLORI, Cane Contractor, examined:

3393. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane contractor.

3394. Do you reside here? Yes. I have resided here for the last twenty-two years.

3395. You have been in the habit of contracting to cut cane? Yes, since 1899.

3396. Will you tell us all about it? The whole of my contracts have been with the Gin Gin Central Mill or with farmers growing cane for the mill. I have conducted some of the largest contracts for the mill since it has been in existence.

3397. What is the tonnage of the average crops you have been contracting for? Last year I cut 200 acres for 2,300 tons. Since 1899 the seasons have been very bad, and I have cut some crops that have only averaged 3 tons per acre.

3398. What do you regard as a fair average crop in a good season in this district? From 15 to 20 tons.

3399. What price have you been getting for a 15 to 20 ton crop? 3s. 3d. and 3s. 4d. a ton for cutting and loading, and as high as 3s. a ton just to cut.

3400. *By Mr. Paget*: That would be for a very light crop? Yes, for such crops as we have had since 1900.

3401. Do you take your contracts from the farmers? Yes.

3402. You employ the labour to do the work? Yes.

3403. What wages do you pay? Last year I paid 6s. 6d. a day and found cane knives and files.

3404. And the men kept themselves? Yes.

3405. *By the Chairman*: Had you any difficulty in getting labour at those rates? I never had any difficulty in getting abundance of labour. In fact, there has always been more labour offering than is wanted in the district.

3406. Were the men you employed strangers to the district? Some were, and some were the sons of residents in the district.

3407. Do you house them? They find their own tents.

3408. Do you find a cook for the gang? No; they find a cook for themselves.

3409. Have you any objection to telling us what you made yourself? Last year I made 9s. a day from the day I started until I finished.

3410. *By Mr. Paget*: You worked with the gang? Yes.

3411. And you took the responsibility of the contract? Yes. The season was very bad, and I could not make much out of it.

P. Flori.

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- P. Flori.
9 April, 1906.
3412. *By the Chairman*: Do you purpose pursuing cane contracting for another year? I am not taking any contracts this year. I have been a little afraid to do so.
3413. *By Mr. Nielson*: What are you afraid of? I am afraid of the action that the canegrowers are taking. I anticipate a shortage of labour at the rates they are offering.
3414. *By the Chairman*: You think the rates they are offering are not sufficiently good? Not to induce men to go into the sugar districts looking for work.
3415. There was a recent meeting at Bundaberg on the subject? Yes.
3416. What are they offering? The rate they fixed was 2s. 9d. for cutting a crop up to 20 tons per acre.
3417. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you tried to get any contracts at your last year's rates? No.
3418. Do you think you could get those rates now? I think I could.
3419. Do you think the prices fixed by the Farmers' Association will be adhered to? I do not. The prices they are offering will not induce men to come into the district.
3420. *By the Chairman*: Look at that report in that newspaper? Yes; I read that report.
3421. *By Mr. Paget*: The resolution which was carried at that meeting is not yet in evidence before the Commission, so we want you to refer to it so that we may include it in our records? Yes.
3422. *By the Chairman*: Just give what the prices were? The Canegrowers' Association are offering from 18s. to 25s. a week and found.
3423. That is for general field work? No, for harvesting, but it is a wage which will not induce many men to come up here to look for canecutting.
3424. *By Mr. Paget*: Why is that? Because the price is not sufficient to induce men to come into the district.
3425. And these will not be labour enough to enable you to carry out your work? No; on account of the wages they are offering for canecutting.
3426. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think it will prevent men from coming? Yes. I see the Isis people are offering from 10s. to 15s. a week.
3427. *By the Chairman*: But that is to allow young boys and old men to make a start at that? Well, there are many outside men who will see that, and they will say they will not go to the canefields because they will only get 15s. a week.
3428. And you think that is not good enough? It will not induce men to come here. It is the wages that I refer to as being too low, and not the prices allowed for contractors.
3429. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you think the contract prices are fair? Yes, I would not object to them, but it is the wages that are offered that I object to.
3430. *By Mr. Nielson*: You think it is a bad advertisement for the district to offer wages like that? It is a bad advertisement for the growers themselves, because I know some of the canegrowers are willing to pay a bigger wage than what was agreed on at that meeting, and they are doing themselves injury by letting the lower price go out as what they think a fair wage.
3431. *By the Chairman*: Have you any idea whether any of these men who worked here before will come back again to work? Some of them are back in the district, and they have been asking me if I am going in for contract work again.
3432. They will work with you again if you take a contract? Yes.
3433. *By Mr. Paget*: During the off season do you take any contracts for hoeing? No.
3434. Or planting? No.
3435. *By the Chairman*: Is anything of that sort done? Yes; work is let out for felling fresh scrub.
3436. *By Mr. Paget*: I referred to planting? No; that is all done by weekly wages, and comes under chipping and scarifying.
3437. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many men did you have in one gang? The biggest number I had was eight. I had gangs out on different farms. They were scattered over several farms.
3438. What is the total number of men you had working for you at one time? I had eighteen men working for me at one time during the last harvesting.
3439. Can you suggest anything whereby these men working for wages can be settled in the district? No; I do not know that the men who principally come into the district are men that would settle down, and even if there was land available they would not touch it.
3440. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you not think they could be induced by some system to settle on small areas and make homes for themselves? A few would do it, but the majority would not look at it.
3441. But even if a start were made with a few it might attract others? If it was successful with the first few who tried it, then others would follow suit.
3442. It is not with the object of turning them into farmers, but in order to allow them to have a home to go to, so that their work would be available on the canefields? I have known young fellows who settled in the Gayudah district who would go for four or five months a year to the canefields to get cheques. Those are the men who will always be at their work in the morning.
3443. They come to work and not to loaf? Yes. There is a percentage of men travelling about looking for work that you cannot place too much confidence in.
3444. Unfortunately that is so? Yes, unfortunately.
3445. *By the Chairman*: Is there any land in the Gin Gin district on which it would be possible to settle men on home-stead areas? There is a large area in the Perry Scrub, 20 miles from here.
3446. You know that scrub? Yes, every bit of it, as I have been all over it.
3447. Is it good? Portions of it are good, and portions of it are stony ridges. It would make good grazing land if the scrub was felled.
3448. *By Mr. Paget*: And planted with grass? Yes.
3449. *By the Chairman*: What distance is it? Twenty miles.
3450. Would there be any settlement nearer to Gin Gin than that? No.
3451. Is there any land that could be settled on? No.
3452. Is there a reserve here? Yes, there is a big reserve here; but the people want that for themselves.
3453. What is the good of it? It is handy for the townspeople to run a few horses and cows on.
3454. Do they use it for that purpose? Yes, they use it for that purpose. When the cattle are brought in to be trucked away, they are put in there because there is always some grass.
3455. *By Mr. Paget*: A number of cattle have been there? Yes; it is also used to put stock in it for market.

3456. *By the Chairman:* There is no other place that could be thrown open except this reserve? None but this reserve. I would like to mention that there will be no more labour required in this district this season although there is a bigger crop of cane than there was last year. P. Flori.
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3457. *By Mr. Paget:* The question is how is the labour to be found for the future? There is sufficient labour for the present time.

3458. For the current year there seems to be a sufficiency of labour? Yes; there is over and above what is wanted. It has always been so in this district.

3459. When we consider the sugar industry as a whole, and that after this year a certain number of labourers in the district have to leave their work, and they are not allowed to continue that work in the future, do you think, with your knowledge and experience of the labour conditions and the labour supply, that there is a sufficiency of labour—of floating labour—to supply the place of the kanaka when he is deported? I honestly believe there is quite sufficient labour in the State to harvest the cane crops even if you deported every kanaka to-morrow.

3460. That is in the whole State? Yes.

3461. There are supposed to be about 6,000 in Queensland? Yes; I believe there are a sufficient number of unemployed walking about now.

3462. *By the Chairman:* Will you give the grounds upon which you base that statement? Twelve months ago I returned from a trip of about 1,400 miles. I went up the coast some 400 miles, and from there out to Clermont, and around by Emerald, Springsure, Rolleston, and down by Banana. I met many hundreds of unemployed men on the roads looking in all directions for work. Those men are still unemployed. Besides that, I met several hundreds who are earning a living of from 10s. to 20s. a week snaring and trapping opossums. If fair conditions and inducements were offered in the sugar districts, they would come into them. There is plenty of labour available at fair conditions.

3463. What do you think the wages should be fixed at all the year round for ordinary field work, exclusive of harvesting time? I think 20s. or 22s. 6d. a week would be a fair inducement for men in the off season, and you would get plenty at that price.

3464. At those rates could you get men all the year round? Yes.

3465. What percentage of the men you saw would you have cared to engage? I dare say 80 per cent. of them could be classed as honest workers; but men who have been travelling about like that are not fit to work at the start, and, unfortunately, a lot of employers do not give that consideration. If a man is put on the morning after he goes to a place, and he cannot keep pace with the others, they say he is no good and let him go.

3466. *By Mr. Paget:* What about the crushing season? I think 30s. a week and found in the crushing season, or 7s. a day and find themselves, is sufficient inducement to bring men into the district. I am perfectly satisfied that if the canegrowers offer that price there will be no shortage of labour.

3467. *By the Chairman:* In the case of a man who is not physically fit when he commences work, do you not think he might agree to take a little less until he got into form? Plenty of them would do that until they were able to do a fair day's work.

3468. *By Mr. Paget:* A week's good food would make all the difference? Yes. I never made anything out of my contracts during the first month, because the men were not used to the work. It has only been after the first month that I have been able to pull up at all. However, with a fairly good crop this year, the cane-cutters can hope to earn a fair living wage.

3469. *By the Chairman:* But if men were expected to work for less the first week, no man would ever allow he had been on the road for a time? There are some who would say anything, but if you put on such a man, he would not be able to keep up with the gang.

3470. *By Mr. Paget:* If these men had homes of their own in the district, there would be no necessity for them to make a fresh start every time, because they would be well fed? That is the best class of labour I have found—people who have settled outside in other occupations on the land, such as corn-growing or dairying. You have no trouble with those men. They stick to their work until it is finished because they want to earn money to improve their own places. That is the class of labour the sugar industry will have to rely upon after the coloured labour is pushed out.

3471. *By the Chairman:* That class of labour can only be obtained by close settlement? Yes. Men will travel 200 or 300 miles into the district if they can get four or five months' steady work. It does not mean that the settlement should be immediately around the sugar districts. Even if you had a large settlement on the Downs, in other branches of agriculture, there are hundreds of men who would come from there during the sugar season.

3472. But are you aware that the farmers on the Downs are already complaining that the sugar-planters are offering wages which are an incentive to labourers to leave the wheat harvest and come up to the cane harvest? Some of the men who worked with me last year are working now about Melidon, and they have written asking me if I am taking contracts this year.

3473. Do you think it desirable that one industry should compete with another for labour? No. The difficulty in connection with the sugar industry is to have labour you can rely upon in the harvesting season.

3474. *By Mr. Paget:* The same difficulty exists in connection with the shearing-sheds? That is so; but they supply a big proportion of their labour themselves—more than the sugar people do.

3475. I doubt that, but, of course, there is this difficulty: that the shearers can travel from shed to shed, whereas the cane-cutters cannot travel from mill to mill, because all the mills are crushing at the same time? Yes.

3476. When did you take this trip around Banana? I left last October twelve months and returned here just twelve months ago, and I met thousands of unemployed tramping about. On all the creeks on the Dawson, Mackenzie, Fitzroy, and other rivers, there were hundreds of men doing nothing but trapping and snaring—not earning much. Some may have four or five horses and put up a bit of a store. They supply the other men with rations and take their skins in exchange. If there was inducement in the sugar districts you would get those men for the sugar industry, but the wages the canegrowers are offering are not a sufficient inducement.

3477. There has been a scarcity of work in the Western part of the State, owing to the number of sheep having decreased by two-thirds—Now that they are getting good seasons in the West, and work is increasing very greatly there, a large number of the men you saw walking about and snaring and trapping are going back to their old occupations? There is no doubt a big proportion of them will

P. Flori. eventually go back as work offere. But when I was out there I saw men contracting for fencing, 3 wires—two bars and a plain—for £7 11s. per mile, with posts 9 feet apart and dear at that. They had to split the posts and carry them from the line and take delivery of the wire and carry it 30 miles to Baubinia station.

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3478. Then you think that, in view of the better seasons, which must attract large numbers of those men back to their original occupation, there is a considerable number who may be attracted to the sugar districts? I honestly believe that a considerable number of them could be attracted here. Of course, I thoroughly understand that the sugar-growers, especially the owners of large estates like Bingera and Fairmead, should not have to depend upon a floating population. It is not desirable to have a big floating population doing nothing in the off season. To solve the question you want to settle people on the land.

3479. *By Mr. Paget*: We all think that is highly desirable? That class of men will give no trouble, because they will not leave their work and get on the "booze."

3480. *By the Chairman*: Where would you get the people? Let the planters offer inducements to people to settle on the land.

3481. You imagine the people to be in Australia at the present time? Yes.

3482. What inducements would you suggest? You would have to give them facilities for getting their produce to market.

3483. Will the men have money enough to raise any produce in the first instance? If you were to offer people good agricultural land, with facilities for getting their produce to market, you would get plenty of settlers.

3484. Would they have means sufficient to keep them until they got a crop? Some would, but I think some assistance should be given to them.

3485. *By Mr. Nielson*: Under the Land Act passed last year provision is made for doing that? And it has been availed of, because I know some who have been refused admission to the groups.

3486. *By Mr. Paget*: The Government do not wish to try the experiment to too great an extent at first? No; it may not be a success; but there are some anxious to get on the land who have not got the means.

3487. *By the Chairman*: Is there any place where you could locate a group here, or within 5 or 6 miles of the place? No, there is no land that near.

3488. It is 20 miles away? There is land in the Perry Scrub 20 miles away, or 10 miles from the Gin mill.

3489. Is there any water there? Yes, it is bounded by the Perry River.

3490. Would that be a good place for settlement? Yes. A group would do well, as there is a lot of good land there. Some of it is no good, but a lot of it is very good land.

3491. *By Mr. Nielson*: How would you get over the distance that you would have to cart your produce, as that would be a serious handicap? Yes, it would be a big handicap.

3492. *By the Chairman*: Would these men have much produce at first over and above keep for their own family use, such as things that would help to save the flour bag? If they put in twenty or thirty bags of corn they would have a difficulty in getting it to market.

3493. *By Mr. Paget*: And only 10 miles to cart it—Why, some of us in the old days had to cart it more than 10 miles, and with no railway to cart it to? Why not put the same gauge between the railway and the mill, so that the line could be used by the Government rolling-stock?

3494. It would be no trouble to carry the stuff from Gin Gin mill to the railway on the narrow gauge line? Oh, no.

3495. *By Mr. Nielson*: In the construction of the Gin Gin Central line it was proposed to make it of the same gauge as the railway? Yes; the cuttings and bridges were all made for a third rail.

3496. That is for a 3 feet 6-inch gauge instead of the present 2 feet one? Yes; and I do not know why it was not carried out.

3497. If it were carried out and made a 3 feet 6-inch gauge, would it tend to settle people on the land? Yes; because they would save half the distance to the railway.

3498. Would the people apply to have the land open for selection? They would, because it is the nearest available land in this district.

3499. *By Mr. Paget*: What is the nature of the scrub? It is hilly. It is undulating country, and contains good rich soil.

3500. It would not be too precipitous to cultivate? No.

3501. *By the Chairman*: The wallabies are bad there? Yes.

3502. There is trouble again? But they come in handy for beef. I was in that scrub for three years, and my principal meat supply was wallabies.

3503. *By Mr. Paget*: Were you timber-getting? Yes. There is a lot of timber there still.

3504. *By Mr. Nielson*: How do you find that men take to living in tents in the sugar season? I never heard any complaints about the men living in tents. It is the usual thing in railway camps and railway line gangs that I have been on for the men to pitch their tents. You can make yourself far more comfortable in a tent than you can in an old rookery of a house. It would be better to live in a tent than in a house with a lot of men.

3505. *By Mr. Paget*: They are under the control of an inspector? Yes, but I have never heard any complaints, nor have I heard the men growl about it, because you can make yourself very comfortable in a tent.

3506. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think that a properly organised Labour Bureau Department would be of assistance to the men and the employers? Yes, I should think it would be of assistance to both if a properly organised Labour Bureau was established that would give statistics of the men wanting work.

3507. And the number of jobs open? Yes.

3508. Because if you wanted a man you would want to know where to make inquiries? It would be a good thing.

3509. How do the men travel who come up from the South? A good few who come from the South come on railway passes.

3510. *By Mr. Paget*: Do they come from the Tweed River? They come from Brisbane, Warwick, and Stanthorpe.

3511. Were you ever asked to deduct the amount of the fare of any man sent to you? Yes, I deducted it from his first wages and paid it to the clerk of petty sessions here, and the men never made any objection. They were satisfied to do it. P. Flori.
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3512. Do you think it would assist men and the industry both if specially reduced rates were given to men going into the sugar districts? I think that when men have not got means to travel they should be given a pass, and the cost of it deducted from the first pay.
3513. That is not the point—Do you think it would induce men to come up here if they got a reduction on the second-class fare? I do not think it would be much inducement, as men would be willing to pay the fare if they knew they were going to a district where they were going to work. These men have asked me if I am going to start the contracts again, and want me to give them a place. If they produce my letter offering them a job, that should be sufficient to get them a pass.
3514. *By Mr. Paget:* That is the course usually adopted? Yes.
3515. What Mr. Nielson asked was if lower rates were instituted would it induce men to go longer distances on the railway than they do at present seeking work? The men would be willing to pay the fare so long as they got a good wage here.
3516. *By the Chairman:* The Labour Bureau will not issue a pass unless the man getting it can satisfy them that he has got work to go to? That is so.
3517. Now he can travel on a pass only when he has got work to go to, but if the rates were lowered men could go and look for work? I never heard anyone working for me object to the fares if they got the work.
3518. *By Mr. Paget:* It has been suggested to the Commission that perhaps a system of discharges might assist a man in getting employment; what is your opinion? I do not think the system is a good one. I do not think it is a good thing to ask men to show a reference from their previous employer.
3519. Why? Because you might be working for a man and have a bit of a tiff, and he gives you a reference that is not to your credit. And yet you may be a good worker.
3520. Would it not be an advantage for a man to show that he had been working for Mr. So-and-so last year? You have that privilege now. If a man is working for an employer and does his work well and he goes and asks for a reference, I do not know any man that would refuse it.
3521. You have the privilege, but it is not a custom? No.
3522. If it were the custom, would it not be to the benefit of the worker? I do not think it desirable. It would be well to leave things as they are.
3523. Such a system is practised by one of the largest companies interested in sugar in the State—namely, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? Yes.
3524. It works well with their men? Yes; but if it became the custom throughout the country that a man had to produce a reference, it would lead to hardships.
3525. *By the Chairman:* Would it ever hurt a good man? It might, because there are some bad employers as well as bad employees.
3526. *By Mr. Paget:* We admit that? Yes; and I think it is not desirable to have it.

DAVID FREDERICK JOHNSTON, Sugar Farmer, examined:

3527. *By the Chairman:* Where is your farm? About a mile from the Gin Gin Central Mill.
3528. What is your area? 730 acres. I am a leaseholder.
3529. What area have you under cane? Seventy-five acres.
3530. What did you cut last year? Fifty acres.
3531. For what tonnage? 720 tons.
3532. Did you cut it by contract or by day labour? By day labour. I was using kanakas. I was not registered for white labour until this year.
3533. *By Mr. Paget:* It is almost unique to be a kanaka employer in this district? Yes.
3534. *By the Chairman:* What did it cost to cut and load that? About 2s. 6d. per ton.
3535. *By Mr. Paget:* You, of course, got no bonus, being an employer of kanaka labour? No.
3536. You are registered now? Yes.
3537. Do you anticipate any difficulty in getting labour next season? I do not think so. There will be labour available for this season.
3538. Are you employing white labour? Yes, since I have registered.
3539. What are you paying for ordinary field work? 18s. and £1 a week and found.
3540. And what do you contemplate paying for next year—have you made up your mind about that? I think £1 a week and found in the off season, and 30s. a week and found in the crushing, would be good wages.
3541. *By Mr. Paget:* Would you pay your horsedriers at the same rate as the cane cutters? I think so. I do not see that there would be any difference.
3542. In the off season you would probably pay more to a good man? Yes, I would pay a good man a little more.
3543. *By the Chairman:* Do you think it is sufficient to depend upon floating labour for the future? I do not think there will be any great difficulty in this district. Of course it is very hard to say. There is abundance of labour of a kind; but whether it will be suitable remains to be proved.
3544. *By Mr. Paget:* You are in rather a good position to attract settlers from other districts? I think so.
3545. You are not altogether dependent upon nomad labour? No.
3546. *By the Chairman:* Would you be in favour of closer settlement here for the purpose of keeping labour at your door? It would be an advantage if that could be done.
3547. Are you familiar with the surrounding country? Yes.
3548. Do you know any Crown lands upon which group settlement could take place? I hardly think there is very much.
3549. Do you know the Perry Scrub? I do not know it very well. I have been through parts of it. Some is good, and some is bad.
3550. Do you know any pastoral land that you could settle people upon so that they might have a garden patch? There is no very great area in the immediate vicinity of Gin Gin.

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3551. Within 10 or 15 miles? There are patches, but none of any great extent. It has been pretty well all taken up.
3552. *By Mr. Paget:* Are there large areas of unalienated Crown lands leased to pastoral tenants or held under occupation license? I think they are all under occupation license now. The leases have run out.
3553. *By the Chairman:* Could people settle upon any of those areas? I do not know any within 10 or 15 miles that would be suitable.
3554. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you seen the rates fixed at Bundaberg? Yes.
3555. Do you think that scale likely to induce men to come to this district to look for work? I think so, if they want it.
3556. *By Mr. Paget:* Is that scale of wages higher than what prevails in agricultural centres in the South, such as the Darling Downs, Laidley, or Beenleigh? I do not think it is any lower. It runs about the same.
3557. Do you think the work of cutting and loading cane is heavier than ordinary farm work? I do not think so. I have tried both cutting and loading, and it would be no great effort for me to go through a season at any field work, and what I can do any other man should be able to do. I cannot see that it is exceptionally hard work in this district.
3558. But you would rather drive a mowing machine than use a cane knife? I dare say it would be easier. I think the wages should be on a sliding scale, because in a bad season the expenses are very much heavier than in a good year, and the returns are less.
3559. *By Mr. Nielson:* How would you fix your scale? I should say £1 a week in the off season, and have a sliding scale dependent on how the crop turned out; if there was an exceptionally good yield, pay them a high rate—pay them, perhaps over £1 10s. a week. In a fair year pay them a little less, and if it was a very poor year they should be satisfied with the wage they were getting—£1, or perhaps get a little advance upon it.
3560. *By the Chairman:* How could you tell until the crop was cut? We know pretty well beforehand what kind of a crop we are going to get.
3561. I am afraid the other man would look at it from another standpoint? If a worker considers he is entitled to a high wage in a good season, he should be ready to share the grower's loss in a bad year, especially when you have a crop of cane which requires half as many men again to harvest it. I do not see why some arrangement could not be arrived at between the workmen and their employers to have the wages fixed on a sliding scale.
3562. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you think the rates fixed at Bundaberg are dependent upon the price that is now being given for cane and the bonus offered by the Commonwealth Parliament? Most certainly.
3563. The bonus in this district is 4s. 4d. per ton, and next year it is likely to be 6s. 6d.? Yes. I consider that in the Southern parts of Queensland it is not a question of whether labour can be obtained. The whole thing rests upon one point, and that has been stated already by Mr. Young. It is a matter of cost. Take away the kanakas and leave the bonus or reduce it to a minimum, and there is no possible hope of carrying on the industry.
3564. And of paying the white men the wages they should be paid? Yes. I do not consider the industry can continue to exist unless it is assisted in some way after the kanakas are removed. Supposing the bonus is removed, will the white workers be content to accept a reduced wage?
3565. That is a problem for the future to solve? Well, the bonus is to be reduced in two years.
3566. You have not had much experience in the working of white labour yet? No.
3567. Can you suggest any other means by which a number of labourers can be induced to go into the industry after this crop is harvested? You spoke about a Labour Bureau. I think it would be of great advantage if people could be induced to settle on the land; but I do not see how that is to be done unless they are given some financial assistance. What is the use of a man taking up a selection if he has no capital? He wants a good bit of capital, because he has to subsist in the off season. A number of men have taken up selections, and then left them because of their want of capital.

HENRY RANDEL, Sergeant of Police and Acting Clerk of Petty Sessions, examined:

H. Randel,
9 April, 1906.

3568. *By the Chairman:* You are a sergeant of the police and acting clerk of petty sessions in Gin Gin? Yes.
3569. How long have you been here? Seven years within a few months.
3570. Do you know all the kanakas in the district? Yes.
3571. Have you any trouble at all in connection with islanders who are settled on the land—do they lead sober and reputable lives? They do at present. I have had no trouble of late years.
3572. I suppose some of them have families? Yes.
3573. Do their children attend the State school? Yes.
3574. Do they attend regularly or intermittently? Fairly regularly.
3575. Have you any knowledge as to the conditions under which they hold their land? I know one who is making his a freehold by paying so much a year. I think it will be a freehold in the course of another three or four years.
3576. Is he purchasing from the Crown? No; from a private individual. Others hold their land on lease.
3577. *By Mr. Paget:* Are they canegrowing? Yes.
3578. Do these men pay the same rental or royalty as white men leasing land? Yes.
3579. *By Mr. Paget:* When these men settled on the land, did they come and ask advice from you at all? No, they did not.
3580. You are not aware of the conditions under which they held their land officially? No.
3581. Or even unofficially? I am aware of the conditions, and that is they pay a royalty of 1s. per ton.
3582. *By the Chairman:* They pay a royalty for the cane they grow? Yes.
3583. *By Mr. Paget:* Did they receive assistance from the landowner, or did they have money of their own? Most of them had been working about the place, and they took a place up there.
3584. *By the Chairman:* Where?—At Watawa? No, at Curralong.
3585. *By Mr. Paget:* Are they exempt "boys"? Some of them are not exempt.
3586. Will you be able in your return to differentiate between those who are ticket "boys" and those who are not? Oh, yes.

3587. *By the Chairman*: Is the man with the freehold married to a white woman? Yes.

3588. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is he a ticket "boy"? Yes.

3589. *By Mr. Paget*: In your opinion, would deportation inflict hardship on those "boys"? Yes; those 9 April, 1906.

3590. Have they spoken to you? They have. Those I speak of have been here twenty years and more.

3591. A very large number of islanders have been here? Yes.

3592. Do they express a wish to return home? No; they wish to remain here.

3593. *By the Chairman*: You have a Labour Bureau here? Yes.

3594. At one time registrations were pretty active? Yes; they have been active until quite recently.

3595. Recently, there has been very little floating labour in the district? Very little.

3596. Have you any statistics you can give us? In May, 1905, forty-nine men registered for work; in June, eighty-one; and in July, 116.

3597. In the last two or three months there have been practically no registrations? That is so. There have been very few travellers through this way.

3598. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do the cane-growers come here to inquire for labour? In some cases they do. I told the men where they could get work, but they never went after it.

3599. *By the Chairman*: Can you form any idea as to whether the bureau has been instrumental in getting work for these men? Yes; a great many of them. The difficulty is that ten or twenty persons may register to-day, and to-morrow I may want to place five or six men, but they have gone.

3600. *By Mr. Nielson*: They are out looking for a job themselves? Yes.

3601. Would it assist the bureau if you had a depot where men could camp while looking for work? I do not know. They would not camp here for any length of time.

3602. They would camp all over the place? Yes; they camp for three or four days now in any case.

3603. Would it not be better for the bureau to have them camp in one place? Yes; it would be better for the men too. They would not get under houses and that sort of thing.

3604. *By Mr. Paget*: To go back to the kanaka settlers, I would ask you whether those islanders are settled in a group, or whether they are scattered about? They are scattered in different places.

3605. Have you heard any complaints from the neighbouring farmers about these people being settled on the land? No.

3606. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you any idea how many white men strangers were working in this district last season? Taking it all round, there must have been 200 men.

3607. Was there much drunkenness last year? Not so much as in previous years.

3608. Were they a better class of men in that respect? Yes; the worst of them did not work a week, and they did not have the money to get drunk on. There was a better class here altogether.

3609. *By Mr. Nielson*: The drunken class of men are getting known? Yes.

(Brisbane.)

TUESDAY, 10 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

JOHN O'NEILL BRENNAN, Immigration Agent and Officer in Charge of Pacific Island Labour, examined:

J. O'N.

Brenan.

3610. *By the Chairman*: How long have you held the position of officer in charge of Pacific Island labour? Since July, 1893.

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3611. During that time you have been brought into frequent contact with Government agents, your own subordinate officers, and the islanders themselves? Yes.

3612. You have subordinate officers at all the places in Queensland where Pacific Islanders are employed? Yes.

3613. I suppose those officers report to you periodically, or as occasion may arise? Yes; they furnish me with all the agreements, which are registered in the Immigration Office.

3614. Have you prepared a return showing the number of Pacific Islanders in the State at the present time? Yes.

3615. What is the number? The number at present in the State is 6,389, inclusive of 350 on the Tweed River, all of whom practically served under agreement in Queensland originally.

3616. Are you able to tell us how many live in the Southern, Central, and Northern districts respectively? Not at present.

3617. You are making out a return giving that information? Yes; that is, subject to the movements of the islanders. There are 2,500 Malayta "boys." The number of islanders now in Queensland is 3,452 less than when the Commonwealth Act became law.

3618. Are the "boys" who are not natives of Malayta natives of the New Hebrides? Probably nearly three-fourths of the total number are natives of the Solomon Islands.

3619. *By Mr. Paget*: Do the figures you have given us include the islanders at Thursday Island? Yes. The number of islanders who left Queensland for their own homes last year was 933, and I estimate that from 1,200 to 1,500 will leave during the current year. That is a rough estimate, because, so long as the islanders have a right to re-engage, it is hard to say what they will do.

3620. *By Mr. Nielson*: There were 6,389 islanders in Queensland on 31st December, 1905? No; on 31st March last.

3621. *By Mr. Paget*: In making up your estimate of the number of islanders likely to return this year, have you taken into consideration the number that left between 1st January and 31st March? The number of islanders in this State on 31st December, 1905, was 6,821, and since then 411 have gone home, while twenty-one have died. Of course, the totals are subject to revision.

3622. *By the Chairman*: Can you supply us with the rates of wages at which the islanders have been working? Yes; I can give you that. Rates varying from 9s. to 15s. per week and found, averaging about 11s.

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3623. Have you some notes; if so, I will not interfere with you, and you can go straight ahead? Yes; I have got them in order.
3624. Well, let us have what you have got ready? Based on the first intimation I received, I can say that no arrangements—I mean special arrangements—have been made for the deportation of kanakas now in the State on the 1st January, 1907.
3625. Yes? I have not attempted to formulate any scheme to deport these “boys” beyond the gradual system that is at present being worked with three boats.
3626. What is the carrying capacity of these three boats in the aggregate? 430 in the aggregate.
3627. How many trips to the islands could they make in a year? Five at the very outside.
3628. By Mr. Paget: That is five trips each? Yes.
3629. By the Chairman: You think they might average five trips? They might do so, but it is extremely unlikely that they will.
3630. Under the most favourable circumstances, then, under that system the kanakas could only be deported, roughly speaking, at the rate of 2,000 a year? Yes, 1,500 or 2,000 a year. I have been in communication with one of the shipping companies in Brisbane, with a view to trying to get steamers carrying not less than 400 to take them, but this shipping company, after getting to a certain point, did not go on with it. The movements of the “boys” are too uncertain.
3631. You endeavoured to make arrangements, but they came to nothing? Yes; they are holding back awhile, but probably there will be renewed action.
3632. Can you tell me whom these vessels belong to? Yes; William Collin and Sons, Limited, own the Lady Norman, and the Ivanhoe and Sydney Belle belong to W. H. Williams and Captain R. E. Reynolds.
3633. Captain Reynolds has been engaged for a long time in the trade? Yes.
3634. Have you every confidence in him? Yes.
3635. He has always given satisfaction? Yes; he has never had any black marks against him.
3636. What have you next on your paper? I was going to add that, referring to the deportation at the end of the year, it struck me as of possible assistance that the “boys” might be dealt with in this way: All islanders recruited subsequent to the federal legislation, and those who are desirous of going home, might be deported at once, and those who have been in the State for five to ten years might be allowed to engage again for six months. Those who have been here for ten years and over might be allowed to engage again for twelve months. All these cases are exclusive of those which come up for special consideration.
3637. By Mr. Paget: You suggest that those who have been in the State for from five to ten years should be allowed to engage for six months only? Yes.
3638. Can you tell us how many islanders were recruited subsequent to the federal legislation, and are now in the State? About 1,209 now in the State.
3639. By the Chairman: You will furnish us with those figures? Yes.
3640. Under such a scheme as that there would be some islanders remaining in each of the three sugar districts? Yes. The object would be to prevent the danger, if there is any, of getting them away in one body, and also to enable better arrangements to be made to fill their places.
3641. And how long do you consider it will take to deport them under such a scheme? I should think it would take eighteen months or two years.
3642. By Mr. Paget: If the islanders who have been in the State from five to ten years were allowed to make only one agreement of six months according to your suggestion, then their agreements would expire on the 30th of June next year, and they would have to be deported as you could not keep them for twelve months? No; you could not do that.
3643. You say it would take eighteen months or two years to get them all out? Yes; but I am only making a very rough calculation. It is merely a suggestion whether there should be anything of the sort at all.
3644. By the Chairman: In your opinion if these islanders were deported at once in the early part of next year would there be any risk of overloading the islands as regards food supply there? It is very difficult to arrive at a very satisfactory conclusion about that.
3645. You have never been at the islands? No. The general opinion seems to be that in the Solomons there would be a risk, but the “boys” will not tell you that—they laugh at the idea.
3646. We have been told that in Malaya the natives do not grow more than is necessary for their immediate requirements, and that, if they stored it up, they would simply be knocked on the head, and their supplies stolen? I am aware of that, but what I am not satisfied of is that anyone is competent to express an opinion. The cultivation of the native food very largely takes place in the hills, and who is there who can say what takes place inland in the island of Malaya?
3647. You think such an opinion can only be based upon surmise? We know that native food is very scarce at times. You cannot buy it, and we know that “boys” have had to recruit because of the scarcity of food.
3648. Driven from their country by starvation? Yes.
3649. Has any official opinion been expressed as to who is to support the islanders after 31st December next? No.
3650. Are they all possessed of means to support themselves until they can be deported? A great many of them are, but it would be very unfair that they should have to support themselves.
3651. Would those who are able be willing to live at their own cost? I do not think they should be asked to do it.
3652. You are of opinion that, if they are not allowed to work here, they should be fed until they can be deported? My opinion is that, if we are not prepared to take them out of this on 1st January, 1907, or within a reasonable time after that, they should not be asked to suffer in consequence. The number of islanders who are still under three years' engagements is 664.
3653. The agreements will all expire by statute on 31st December? 189 will expire in April, 139 in July, 76 in September, 155 in October, 48 in November, and 37 in December.
3654. By Mr. Paget: So that they expire very nicely for the purpose of getting the islanders home during the current year, provided they do not sign on again? Provided they do not sign on again—which the new regulation allows them to do.

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3655. They may sign on for any period up to 31st December? Yes.

3656. Of course, you know the old regulation was absolutely illegal the whole time you were enforcing it against the employers? I know that. A large number of "boys" cancelled their agreements before their time was up in order to re-engage up to the end of December. The number of reengagement islanders now is 2,800, and the rates of wages vary from 9s. to 15s. a week and found, probably averaging about 11s. and found. Their agreements expire, approximately, as follow:—April, 177; May, 109; June, 36; July, 39; August, 29; September, 17; October, 43; November, 117; and December, 2,233.

3657. *By the Chairman:* That covers all the islanders under agreement now? Yes; as far as the agreements have reached me. Islanders appear to be re-engaging now. I gather that from the fact that I have received agreements covering 500 "boys" since 1st January last.

3658. *By Mr. Nielson:* From what part of Queensland have they principally come? From all districts, but I should say the majority have been from the North. They have engaged for periods of six months, or up to the end of December, but chiefly the latter. There are twenty-three islanders married to white women, according to the latest figures I have got. None of those in Brisbane have any children, but that does not include "exempt" islanders or French subjects.

3659. *By the Chairman:* From what islands do the French subjects come? The Loyalties, Lifu, and New Caledonia.

3660. They call themselves Frenchmen? They are known to be French. I think everyone of them would be entitled by length of residence to exemption; but, when they applied for exemption tickets, they were told that the Act did not apply to them. That is the story they all tell, and I have no doubt it is true.

3661. How many of these Frenchmen are there in Queensland? I cannot say; but very few.

3662. They are mostly Lifu men? I think so.

3663. *By Mr. Paget:* Are there any Muré "boys"? Very few. I have not come across any lately.

3664. *By the Chairman:* Have you any record of marriages amongst themselves? I can give you the information for the Brisbane district. The number of islanders farming in this district, including Yandina, Nambour, and Buderim Mountain, is fifty-six, of whom fifteen are married—two to white women, five to aboriginals, and the balance to their own island women, or to women from other islands. There is one widow, with a grown-up Queensland-born daughter.

3665. Do you know anything of the tenure upon which they hold their farms? They have leases with a duration of about seven years, but a number of the leases are almost expired.

3666. If a man had just started a seven years' lease, it would be unfair to deport him? Some of the leases have not started very long. They mostly lease the land at a nominal rent, and a royalty on the cane of 1s. a ton. I have never taken any very active part in connection with those leases, because they are against the spirit of the Act, although they are not against the letter.

3667. Could you not secure us the information by the time we return to Brisbane? I have it in the rough now.

3668. You will make us a return showing the terms of the lease, the unexpired portion of the lease, what is his crop, and what hardship is likely to be inflicted on him if he is taken away from his crop? Yes, I can get you all that information. In the Buderim, Yandina, and Nambour districts there are about 132 islanders altogether.

3669. *By the Chairman:* Farming? No. There are fifty-six engaged in farming included in that number, and ten under agreement.

3670. *By Mr. Paget:* There are only ten out of the whole number under agreement? Yes. Those at present not under agreement are either working for or are visiting other islanders.

3671. *By the Chairman:* Could you send an officer through the district to collect this information with some accuracy before we return to Brisbane? Yes. It will also include the "boys" at the Tweed River, as when you are deporting the Queensland "boys" some of these Tweed "boys" will have to be sent back, and their expenses paid for out of the fund which exists for the deportation of Queensland islanders.

3672. *By Mr. Paget:* You have no control over the Tweed "boys"? No.

3673. *By the Chairman:* If they came back into Queensland they would at once become a charge on the State? They are mostly provided for.

3674. They would be a charge on somebody? Yes, they would be a charge on the State.

3675. In sending men round to collect information, your return should include these "boys" at the Tweed? Yes.

3676. *By Mr. Paget:* How do you mean that they will become a charge on the State? If they come back here they will have to be fed, or else they will become destitute.

3677. But supposing they consider it advisable to stay in the State of New South Wales, what do you propose to do? Nothing.

3678. What could be done? Well, I should do what I was told, but I do not think that Queensland can do anything with them.

3679. You say there are fifty-six islanders farming in the Brisbane district; are the greater number of those islanders settled on the land at Nambour, Yandina, and Buderim Mountain, or are some of them in the district south of Brisbane? They are all up the North Coast.

3680. What crops are they growing? Cane and bananas, and there may also be some growing pineapples, but I do not think so.

3681. Have you any idea as to how many of these islanders are growing cane exclusively? I can tell you that. not

3682. We can get that information at Nambour mill? Yes.

3683. I presume those who are growing cane are growing it for the Nambour mill? Yes; the Buderim "boys" are growing bananas.

3684. Are these islanders that are settled down settled in groups, or are they scattered about? Some of them are in groups. A large number are tenants of one person, but I do not want to give his name.

3685. Are they tenants of one man? Yes, a large number are the tenants of one man.

3686. As tenants of one or more landlords are you satisfied, from what has come to your knowledge, that they have what we may term a fair deal with their leases; at any rate, that they are not rackrented? No, but in my opinion they are not satisfactory tenants as a rule. As cane-growers they may be all right, but while there is work going on for the "boys" in Queensland I should say they are not satisfactory tenants because they leave the crop, when they ought to be cleaning it, to get wages.

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3688. Have you had any complaints from the white settlers in the district where they are settled down? No.
3689. Do they seem to lead steady lives? They are a very orderly lot.
3690. Have you any knowledge as to whether their children attend the State schools? Yes. I know some of them do. I also know three or four cases where the parents have Savings Bank accounts for the children.
3691. *By the Chairman:* A great number of the Pacific Islanders have adopted the Christian religion? Yes, out of 132 there are 112 Christians.
3692. *By Mr. Paget:* I do not wish you to answer this if you do not care to do so, but I would like to ask you whether in your opinion deportation would inflict hardship on those islanders who are settled on the land on the North Coast? Yes, it would. They would be deported against their will. I have had it in writing from the Buka Buka "boys" that they have decided to stay in Queensland.
3693. *By the Chairman:* Where are they? Around Nambour and Buderim.
3694. Would they adopt a locality further north, say, in the tropical parts of the State, if they wished to stay? I cannot tell you that, but if the ringleaders agree to it the whole lot would go, as they are very clamorous "boys."
3695. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many of them are there? There are twenty, not counting the women or children.
3696. *By the Chairman:* And they are in the Buderim Mountain? They are scattered. Most of them are scattered. There are some at Nambour and some at Buderim.
3697. Farming? They are mostly on farming land.
3698. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you not issued instructions to all your sub-departments throughout the State that they are to collect the additional passage money for the return of the islanders from the last employers on behalf of the "boys"? Yes, a circular letter has gone out to that effect.
3699. *By Mr. Paget:* And the coastal passage also? We call it the balance of the passage.
3700. *By Mr. Nielson:* With regard to Mr. Paget's question, are you aware that a number of the employers are not paying the additional passage money? I am aware that a number have not paid in the past.
3701. But I mean recently? Recently I received a report of one case where it has been refused.
3702. Are you taking any steps to compel them to pay? Yes; I have wired to the Mackay inspector to give that particular employer twenty-four hours' grace, and summons him if he does not pay.
3703. Do you not count in the additional passage the amount of coastal fare necessary to bring a "boy" to the ship? If an employer is liable for anything, he is liable for the lot, I take it.
3704. I think so, too; are you endeavouring to collect that as well from the last employer? I have not given special instructions about the collection of that money, but since a legal opinion has been given that the employers are liable, the ships have decided to call at the Northern ports.
3705. But the ships do not go to every place where there are "boys" working in the North? No.
3706. If you are of opinion that the additional return passage includes the passage from the district where the "boy" is to where he goes on board the ship, are you taking steps to recover that money as well? I have issued no definite instructions that the coastal passage is to be collected from the employer, but I take it that if the employer pays the rate where he is that will be included. But suppose a "boy" has left his employer before the ship is sailing, and he has gone into another district, are you to hold the employer liable?
3707. That is for you to find out from your Crown Law Department, Mr. Brennan—You are aware that three "boys" arrived in Bundaberg last week from Mackay, and they complained that they had to pay their own fare to Bundaberg, and their own additional passage money to the islands? Yes, but I have no particulars of the "boys."
3708. You are aware of it? I have seen it in the Press.
3709. And one "boy" said that in consequence of this he had no money left? Yes, I saw that in the Press.
3710. Did you see in the Press that fully 100 Malayta "boys" in the Mackay district who are anxious to go home have not the money to pay their full passage money; their last employers refused to pay it, and your department refused to collect it? I have not seen the statement.
3711. How do you administer section 5 of the Amending Act of 1892—that is the section which deals with the maintenance of islanders after the expiration of their agreements and the time when they either enter into fresh agreements or have an opportunity of returning home? We have never enforced that since 1896.
3712. Why? Because the Governor in Council gave special instructions that it was not to be enforced.
3713. Will you get a legal opinion on that shortly? Yes.
3714. Because there is a difference of opinion about it—some re-engagement islanders claim to be maintained until a boat is ready to take them to their homes, and there are employers in the Bundaberg district who do maintain both the three-year and the re-engaged "boys"? I am aware of that. If these additional regulations are *ultra vires*, the last employer will be liable, without doubt, for their maintenance.
3715. I want the department to ascertain, so that it will be in a position to take action—in one part of Queensland you enforce it against the last employer, and in another part you do not—there is no uniformity in the administration? We have never enforced the maintenance of re-agreement islanders anywhere since 1896.
3716. Well, there is one very large employer in the Bundaberg district who maintains any "boy"? But the department does not make him.
3717. The only thing the "boys" are told is that if they want to be maintained they must stop on the plantation, but that they cannot be maintained in town? The department has issued no such instruction as that.
3718. *By Mr. Paget:* That system has been in force in the Mackay district for many years? It was enforced everywhere until 1896.
3719. The employers in that district always tell the "boys," "If you stop on the plantation, you get your tucker until you go home or until you re-engage"? That is the common practice.
3720. *By Mr. Nielson:* That is in pursuance of the section? Yes; but the department has not administered the section since 1896 with respect to the re-engagement of islanders.

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3721. The difficulty is going to be accentuated now? Yes.

3722. From now on you want to have a uniform system of administration? The only method that can be adopted is to declare these regulations *ultra vires*, and instruct inspectors by circular that every employer is legally liable.

3723. I do not think you need instruct them in the Bundaberg district? They want looking after there as well as anywhere else.

3724. They are carrying out the section of the Act and ignoring the regulation; but in other districts they carry out the regulation and ignore the section? Yes; but they have objected to doing it.

3725. *By the Chairman*: Who objected? The employers. They have been charged a re-engagement fee of 5s., which clears them of any responsibility under that regulation as long as a "boy" is physically or mentally sound when he terminates his agreement.

3726. *By the Chairman*: Is that supposed to be the effect of the regulation? That was its object.

3727. By the payment of 5s. they possibly clear themselves of a liability that might run into £10 or £15? Yes.

3728. I agree with Mr. Nielson that you should obtain a legal opinion about the matter at once? A "boy" comes here and signs an agreement for three years. After working one month he falls sick, and he remains sick for the balance of the three years. His employer pays for his maintenance in the hospital, and, if the "boy" dies, the employer has to bury him.

3729. *By Mr. Paget*: And pay his wages? Yes.

3730. *By Mr. Nielson*: That is not the section I am referring to—the one I am referring to is the one which provides that the employer is bound to maintain the islander until he either enters into a fresh agreement or has an opportunity of returning to his home? It is just the same. You engage a "boy" to-day under that section, and from now until he gets a new employer you are liable, whether your agreement has expired or not, under that section. The regulation was brought in to relieve the employer of that liability.

3731. *By Mr. Paget*: In connection with re-engaged kauakas only? I have taken a "boy" from Beenleigh, put him into the hospital, and charged an employer, who has not seen him for twelve months, with his medical treatment and maintenance. It was to meet cases of that sort that the regulation was framed imposing a fee of 5s. in respect of every agreement, and if a "boy" was sound at the end of the agreement the employer's liability ceased.

3732. You remember several cases of that kind? I remember scores of them.

3733. *By the Chairman*: Will you explain how the cost of repatriating the islanders is provided for? If the islander elects to go home at the expiration of his first agreement, the employer sends him home and pays the ship. Respecting the islanders who stay, the employer pays £5 to me, which sum is credited to "Return Passages." The liability stands against the department under that heading. The Pacific Island Fund was formed by the collection from all indentors of labour of £3 per head upon "boys" introduced. It has been augmented by registration fees upon re-agreements, unclaimed deceased islanders' estates, wages, and fines.

3734. Will the fund pay for the return of the islanders now in Queensland? No.

3735. *By Mr. Nielson*: Why? The balance will not. Of course the State is liable.

3736. Why will it not? Because of the hospitals which were run by the Government on a capitation fee at a loss.

3737. *By Mr. Paget*: During what years? From the time they were started until they closed on 31st December, 1890. The unsatisfactory condition financially was frequently drawn attention to by the late officer in charge, Mr. A. Woodward, in his reports.

3738. *By the Chairman*: The money is not there? No. I have a statement here in connection with the fund. Would you like to see it?

The Chairman: I do not think you need trouble handing in that statement. You say the money is not there, and that is all we are interested in.

3739. *By Mr. Paget*: The fact that there is no money now in the fund to send back those islanders who are now in the State is not due to any failure on the part of the employer to carry out his bond in connection with the passage money? Not to any appreciable extent.

3740. *By the Chairman*: The money has been spent for other purposes? The balance of the money has been spent on hospitals, amounting to £21,000.

3741. What is the cost of the passage—it was £5 then, and it is £7 now? Yes, it costs £7 now from Bundaberg and £7 10s. from Lucinda Point.

3742. Have you anything further on your notes that will be of service to us—We heard somewhere that the Right Hon. G. H. Reid authorised exemptions to be made in the cases of certain Pacific islanders not otherwise exempted—Do you know anything about it? Yes.

3743. How many were there? The question was raised whether it occurred when Mr. Reid was in Brisbane. It did not occur while the Prime Minister was in Brisbane, but in September, 1904, Mr. Reid consented to two islanders—Walkbut and his wife—whose infirmities prevented them from securing employment, being allowed to work without restriction, and they have been thus practically exempted.

3744. Are they still alive? Yes. Then, in October, 1904, an islander named Woorangwill, then resident in Queensland seventeen years, was similarly exempted on the ground that he was married to a white woman. In September, 1905, an islander named Al-fer-bo, otherwise Tom Motlap, then resident in Queensland twenty-five years, was similarly exempted by Mr. Deakin, on the ground that he was married to an aboriginal half-caste of Queensland, and had a family of six children to support.

3745. Is there anything to show that these men should be free from deportation? That was never expressed, but I should think it would be fair to assume it.

3746. Have you anything more on your list on the subject of Pacific Islanders? It has been reported and published in the Press that communication was received from the Bishop of North Queensland respecting the deportation of Christian islanders to Feo, on the west coast of the island of Malaya. I read that report, and there can be no doubt that His Lordship's statement applies to a good many islanders resident in this State, but I am inclined to doubt very much whether there is anyone in Australia competent to make a straight-out statement respecting the whole of our island population, belonging as they do to so many different places. My impression is that actual danger to life is somewhat exaggerated. I have questioned a good many old "boys" of various islands; a few have stated, "I cannot go home, I have been too long here." Others have said, "I do not want to go home. I came here to work and

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stop if I like." Frequently I have put the question, "Supposing you go home, do you think you would be killed?" and the reply generally is, "Not in my island, but in island where man wild. He go there he kill." But the boy questioned would never admit that this danger would be in his own island. It was always in somebody else's. Upon asking another "boy" I always got the same answer—never in his own island. The Tanna "boys" have told me that news has come from Tanna that all their "boys" were wanted to go home, and that if there was not enough money here to take them there was plenty in Tanna. My informant gave me his reason for this message, and that was that his countrymen wanted the Queensland "boys" home in order to educate the rising generation. I simply give this for what it is worth. The "boy" who made that statement to me is a very intelligent "boy."

3747. Was he a missionary "boy"? Yes. It is a somewhat puzzling statement that, because we have heard on the pretty reliable authority of Mr. Russell, who was there at the time that the Tanna "boys" said that if any Tanna "boys" were forcibly turned out of Queensland they would shoot at the boats.

3748. *By the Chairman*: That meant that they would fire on the landing boats? Yes. I believe the Tanna "boys" are the best native shots with European weapons in the Pacific, but I do not think that is great praise. His Lordship's suggestion that some of the Solomon "boys" who had no wish to land in their own homes, might be sent to Fea, might easily be tried; but I see no occasion whatever for sending them *via* Norfolk Island, as the Bishop suggests. Touching Fea, I think the Commission might consider the advisableness of getting information as to what sort of place it is. I have been told that it is very swampy and unhealthy, which is a very serious matter if any of the Christian islanders landed there with Queensland-born children.

3749. Is it supposed to be uninhabited? It is on the coast of Malaya.

3750. *By Mr. Nielson*: It is a mission station? Yes; but I am not quite competent to speak on that. Mr. Ussher will be able to give you more information on that matter than I can.

3751. *By the Chairman*: Did you know of any islanders being taken away by Bishop Stone-Wigg? Yes.

3752. How many did he take? He took a few, but I cannot tell you the number.

3753. What would be the position of those islanders?—Would they clearly understand that they were not going to their homes? Yes, they would understand all about that. I take it, myself, that those "boys" are just going from one part of the Commonwealth to another when they are going to New Guinea. There are a good many other South Island "boys" already there—boys who do not belong to New Guinea at all.

3754. *By Mr. Paget*: There are a number of schools in the State in which the islanders are educated? Yes.

3755. Missionary schools? Yes.

3756. Can you give the Commissioners any idea of the average attendance at these schools? No; but I can get it for you. I have not got the figures with me now.

3757. The employers practically find the money to carry on these schools? Yes.

3758. And their efforts are subsidised by endowment from the Pacific Islanders' fund? They have been, but that has ceased. For some years they were allowed £500 between them, and it was divided *pro rata* among the schools. Then it was stopped, but after some agitation it was reintroduced upon a sliding scale. It was reduced after a number of years, and the amount gradually became less, and it has ceased altogether now.

3759. *By Mr. Nielson*: Can you furnish a statement showing what has become of the return passage money—that is, the £5 which was deposited to pay the return passage money of every islander who arrived in Queensland, and showing how the fund has decreased so much? It could be done.

3760. *By Mr. Paget*: You said a large sum of money had been spent on the hospitals? Yes, £21,000.

3761. *By the Chairman*: At one time you had charge of the Labour Bureau? Yes.

3762. You are not now connected with it? No.

3763. During the time that it was under your control, did you find it of use in finding employment for men and labour for employers? Yes, it works well in large centres. It worked well in Brisbane, and also in Toowoomba, Townsville, and Bundaberg. In Ipswich, also, it worked pretty well.

3764. It was comparatively neglected in the smaller places? The machinery was not neglected.

3765. Neither the employer nor the employee availed themselves of it? No, particularly the employer. I noticed some remarks in the Press the other day about the Labour Bureau being run on business lines. You cannot run anything on business lines if you cannot get the people to come to it. There has been a complete Labour Bureau system in force for eighteen or nineteen years, but it has only been used in the large centres, and only used at times when there was a large surplus of labour. It was then made use of to distribute men to different places. It was frequently made use of by people who thought they would get cheap labour, and that had this effect—it hunted away good men many times.

3766. They would not register? No. They would not register with undesirable men.

3767. Mr. Caulfeild told us in Bundaberg that he found the old depot, which he used for the accommodation of wayfaring men who had registered, of great assistance—do you think it would be well to have such depôts in connection with the bureaux in large places? That is a very doubtful point. If you are going to open shelters for the unemployed to stop in, you will be undertaking a very big thing, because the places will have to be properly cared for, or else what is termed the "scallywag" will drive out the decent man.

3768. It would be liable to abuse by the unfit? Yes. It is a most difficult thing to do with the machinery that the Government would be likely to have at its disposal.

3769. *By Mr. Paget*: The wardsmen have been dispensed with in the various depôts? Yes. The Labour Bureau was started in conjunction with immigration. In 1887 there was an unemployed agitation, which was more or less fictitious, and the bureau was formed and used to disperse the unemployed. At that time there was a wardman in every depot who was paid £80 a year, with fuel, light, and a sustenance allowance of 1s. a day for himself and his wife. Now there are no depôts in Ipswich, Toowoomba, Maryborough, and Rockhampton. At Rockhampton the building has been used for other purposes. At Townsville the police have the building. I suppose the building at Bowen has tumbled down. There are no officials in those places now.

3770. *By the Chairman*: You think that, unless the depôts are managed somewhat expensively, it would be worse than useless to try the experiment? I think it would be a great mistake to do anything in that direction unless it was well managed. If the bureau is to be of use to the planters, they must supply it

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with proper information at the proper time. It is no use going to the bureau when you are stuck for cane-cutters, because there is no time to get them then. In trying to provide for an emergency of that sort, you might flood a place with unemployed.

3771. You think that the planter, the farmer, or the pastoralist should make his wants known some time before? Yes. Of course, the difficulty there is the season. Through rain not coming at the proper time, the whole thing might be broken up.

3772. How might the usefulness of the bureau be improved? If the men will register, and if the employers will go to it for the labour they want, we shall get at what the supply is.

3773. Then the employer and the employee have the whole thing in their own hands. Yes. If they cannot get the proper information, they have their remedy.

3774. Do you know whether Mr. Deshon is in town? I do not know. Although I am not now connected with the Labour Bureau, I am connected with the distribution of relief. I find that amongst the friendly societies there are about 700 unemployed in Brisbane. Nearly all of them are labourers, and many of them are married men. That is one of the greatest difficulties.

3775. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do they get any assistance from their societies? I presume they must get some, because the societies know their movements. I doubt if any one of them comes to me for rations. There are about 100 Queensland Ironworkers' Assistants out of work; 350 Waterside Union men, who are practically unemployed; about thirty members of the Boot Trade Operatives Union; six members of the Typographical Association; eleven members of the Queensland Journeymen Coopers; and six members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. It is most difficult to estimate the number of unemployed in Queensland, and I do not think anyone is competent, under present conditions, to arrive at a reliable conclusion on the subject. No one connected with them can tell you anything reliable. They may be able to tell you about their own group, but I am speaking of the whole State. I should say, at a very rough guess, that you could count upon 2,000 white men to take the place of the kanakas in Queensland.

3776. *By the Chairman:* You do not think there would be many more than 2,000 white men to take the place of 6,000 kanakas? I do not think so. The conditions are so very awkward. You might supply the Downs harvest with the overflow from the sugar districts, but you could not very well supply the sugar districts with an overflow from the Downs.

3777. We heard yesterday at Gin Gin that men will leave the wheat harvest to work at the same wages in the sugar district because the hours are so much shorter? That might be; but they would be a bit late for the sugar season. The wheat harvest is about November, and that would be three months behind the sugar season.

3778. We heard about some Woolloongabba lads being sent up to Gin Gin—do you know anything about it? I sent them up. When the Public Estate Improvement Fund was started by Mr. Kidston, the practice was to give railway passes through the bureau only to men who could show that they had engagements. Any other application for a pass was treated as a matter of relief, and consequently I had the whole of the floating population who were after railway passes coming to me. I sent a lot of those young fellows away.

3779. Do you know whether a fair percentage of them afterwards refunded the amount of their fares? A very poor percentage. I cannot remember this particular case, but I can quote another. Of 340 odd passes that were issued from Charters Towers, eighty odd were afterwards paid for. That issue covered two years.

3780. *By Mr. Payet:* That was only 25 per cent? About that. I thought it was not bad, considering that it was an outside place.

3781. We were told that these Woolloongabba lads did very good work, and that they earned 25s. a week and rations? Very likely they may have paid.

3782. *By Mr. Nielson:* They may have paid without your knowing? They could not do that, but I keep no record after the money reaches me. It goes to the Home Office from me. We are working under a different vote to the bureau.

3783. Do you know whether employers, as a rule, assist in getting a refund made to the State? Generally they do, but the greatest part of the loss occurs in this way: John Smith leaves Brisbane with all sorts of credentials, and it is very difficult to bowl him out, as he is Thomas Brown when he gets to the other end. Nobody knows him. Most respectable young fellows with union tickets come to me, and by name they are totally different men when they reach their destination.

3784. *By the Chairman:* Can you suggest any means by which that can be got over? No.

3785. You know how they used to deal with the Chinese who went back to China? Photographs would not assist. The game would not be worth the candle. If a private individual guaranteed the fare, many of these men would never impose upon him; but they have not the slightest compunction about imposing upon the Government.

3786. *By Mr. Nielson:* If an employer sent to Brisbane for twelve men, if he was asked to deposit a cheap fare, that would facilitate the department getting paid. If a man went to work, the employer would not be out of pocket; and, if the man did not turn up, the employer would get his deposit back in respect of that particular man, and the department would not trust the man again? But the man who did not turn up would not come back under the same name.

3787. He would not get a job until he got to the other end? He might have a better one. A man often gets out on the way and takes a fresh job, or the pass may not be for him at all. I have put a man in the train here to go to Maryborough, in order to be certain that he went. He did not go at all, but a man to whom I had refused a pass got into the train with a penny ticket for Brunswick street, and the man I gave the pass to got out and the other fellow went on.

3788. They exchanged tickets? Yes. That has been done over and over again.

3789. But that would not matter so long as the employer got his twelve men? If he did get his twelve men. But supposing he only got six?

3790. If a properly organised bureau were availed of by both employer and employee, would that not minimise the loss on the fares? Yes, because you would attract a better class of both. It would cost something to do it, but it would pay in the end.

3791. Do you think private registry offices would interfere with the work of a public Labour Bureau? Not to a serious extent. Both sides have to pay the private man, and neither has to pay the bureau. The only thing that might happen is that the private man might induce the labourer to get a pass from the bureau, to save the railway fare.

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3792. Could you not prevent that by not giving passes except from bureau to bureau? That has been done. But when I am satisfied, after fairly close examination, that a man has work to go to, I do not care whether he gets it through the bureau or not.

3693. *By Mr. Paget*: You were discussing the system of giving passes to men in various districts? Yes.

3794. How would you propose to fill up the gap in the Northern sugar districts which are isolated from railway communication? The only way it could be done would be by some mutual arrangement between the bureau and the employer to meet half-way and endeavour to establish the setting in of a stream of good labour.

3795. You are aware that the employers do guarantee the men's steamer fares? Yes.

3796. You are aware that sometimes the employers pay the passage but do not get the man? Yes.

3797. In every instance where men have worked at certain of these towns on the Northern coast you will always send them up there, provided you get someone's guarantee, but not necessarily the employer's—You are in favour of having the passage guaranteed by someone else? The men would sooner pay the passage. The guarantor backs the promissory note. If a good man comes forward, and some responsible person says he will back a promissory note, I am pretty safe in sending the man along without the backing, because I know that the man would not offer to back a promissory note unless he was absolutely certain of his man.

3799. In what way do you think there could be some mutual arrangement between the Northern sugar growers and the bureau, because it is rather a difficult matter that will have to be faced by and by? I cannot say. The only way that I can see is that the Government should get a concession from the steamship companies, and the employers should share the risk.

3800. If you received a telegram telling you that 500 men would be wanted for the sugar crushing season, as one who has been connected with the bureau for many years, how would you meet that demand?—Would you tell the men to walk overland? That wire was not received for the purpose of sending men there. It was a wire for information in order to check the rush that was being made from Rockhampton lately. Men were coming for passes, and they travelled by rail to Rockhampton and then walked the rest of the distance, getting there in time for the sugar season, and without waiting to see whether they would be wanted for the sugar season or not. We do not want a repetition of what happened in 1903, when 500 men went to Mackay, and we had to feed them. If that labour is wanted by and by, there should be some guarantee at the other end as to whom these men are employed by.

3801. You must recognise, and anybody must recognise, that the sugar districts on the Northern coast are not in as favourable a position for getting labour when the kanaka has left the State as the sugar districts on the railways? Most certainly not.

3802. Except carrying out the old idea of the employer guaranteeing the passage, you cannot make any further suggestion at the present time? No, except getting a reduced fare and guaranteeing half of it. I do not believe there will be enough labour to guarantee for the North.

3803. *By Mr. Nielson*: You are aware that when an employer in the North engages a person through a private registry office here the registry-keeper signs an agreement on behalf of the employer? Yes.

3804. Would the bureau in the same way engage on behalf of the employer? I think they would have to be specially appointed as an agent.

3805. Well, when the employer authorises the bureau to engage a man, would that constitute an agency? Yes. But if they wired down for twenty men it would not hold as an agency.

3806. Presuming it would, could you not make an agreement setting out the amount and the service to be given, and the amount to be refunded according to arrangement by the employer to the department? Yes.

3807. That is the system with regard to the working of a private registry? Yes. I would go further than that. I would make the engaged man take a small payment to bring him under the penal clauses of the Masters and Servants Act.

3808. To bring you back to the kanakas, when an employer sends to the islands for a kanaka he risks £25 straight away? No.

3809. *By Mr. Paget*: Not until he gets the man? That is it. He risks £3.

3810. *By Mr. Nielson*: He pays £25 and gets a "boy," and he risks that "boy" living for three years? Yes; when he did that he took a very big risk.

3811. Would you consider it to be a hardship under white labour conditions to ask him to take a lesser risk? If I were an employer, I would not.

3812. *By the Chairman*: For his own advantage? You cut the ground from under a man's feet and ask him to pay for more. I am speaking from the employer's point of view. You are taking from him what he has paid for.

3813. Who is taking it? The State is taking the Pacific Islander from him.

3814. The State is not doing it? Well, somebody is.

3815. *By Mr. Nielson*: You must take the position as it is—Suppose the kanaka has gone and a man wants to use the Labour Bureau to get himself some labour, is it not fair to ask him to pay for any advantage he may get? He will have to be asked, and he will have to do it.

3816. Would it be a hardship to ask an employer when he engages a man through the Labour Bureau to put down the out-of-pocket expenses of the State in connection with that engagement, whether it be railway fare or anything else? No, provided you gave him other protection.

3817. Do you think he would be sufficiently protected by what you suggest regarding the penal clauses of the Masters and Servants Act? I suppose he would be better protected if a convoy were sent with the men. I am speaking from a little experience. I notice that the pastoralists have sent men under those conditions and borne all the expenses of the engaged men in Brisbane, and I know of one occasion where the men walked away and "blacklegged" on them and got three months for it. They had a man with them from here right to the place where they landed.

3818. If the men got three months that would not be a greater loss than the sugar-planter took in the event of a kanaka dying within six months, would it? No; but he did not get them at anything like the rate of pay, and he had only a pay-day once in six months.

3819. That is a doubtful advantage? And he has a strong Act of Parliament preventing them from going to the "pub" in a wholesale manner on pay-day.

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3820. Do you not think you could devise some scheme for the mutual benefit of the employer of labour and the men and the protection of both sides? Yes. I do not think there is any insurmountable difficulty. The only difficulty I see about this is that it is going to take place too suddenly.

3821. You refer to the alteration from black to white labour? Yes.

3822. Speaking purely about the working of the bureau, can you devise a system which can be worked effectively for the mutual protection of the employer and employee, and for the benefit of the State as well? Yes.

3823. *By Mr. Paget*: Taking into consideration the distance—Longreach, Mackay, or Cairns, or whatever the case may be? You can do it in connection with the sugar districts, but to do it all over the colony is a different thing altogether.

3824. *By Mr. Nielson*: You might start it in connection with one industry and extend it if the system is workable? Yes.

3825. Will you endeavour to outline something, and let the Commission have it before the end of next month? Yes. The machinery is all there now.

3826. But it wants oiling a lot, as we have been to places where we saw the books of the Bureau, and not an entry in any of them? You will see some places where the books were never taken out of the boxes they were sent up in.

3827. A man who has twelve or thirteen different billets, and does not get paid for the fourteenth, does not break his neck trying to make work.

3828. Would you recommend a totally separate Department of Labour? Yes.

3829. Do you think a separate department could do more good than a bureau run in connection with other departments? I think so, because the Minister would be in direct communication with his officers.

3830. *By Mr. Paget*: Would you have separate officers in every centre where there was unemployed labour or where labour was required? You could not have that. It would entail a large expenditure.

3831. *By Mr. Nielson*: In the smaller centres the work might be done by other officers? Yes; but you want to be more or less of an enthusiast in every place where there is any chance of booming the bureau. The officers should take a pride in it.

3832. You have inspectors of Pacific Islanders throughout the coastal districts, and after the islanders have gone there will be very little for them to do—could they not be converted into officers of a Department of Labour? Some of them could.

3833. Would the existing offices and premises in the various places be suitable? I think so.

3834. Would there be any additional expense in the way of furnishing offices? No. The large towns could act as distributing centres.

3835. Has the Pacific Island Department been self-supporting? I think it was self-supporting as long as recruiting was going on, but our revenue has been cut off for three years. The balance to the credit of the fund since 1st January, 1896, has been as follows:—1st January, 1896, £20,929 14s. 3d.; 1st January, 1897, £20,550 12s. 10d.; 1st January, 1898, £22,150 0s. 1d.; 1st January, 1899, £23,260 9s. 10d.; 1st January, 1900, £20,741 8s. 9d.; 1st January, 1901, £19,768 5s. 6d.; 1st January, 1902, £20,417 9s. 9d.; 1st January, 1903, £10,896 8s. 6d.; 1st January, 1904, £11,623 19s. 6d.; 1st January, 1905, £12,392 15s. 3d.; 1st January, 1906, £11,931 14s. 3d.; on 31st March, 1906, £10,619 12s. 10d.

3836. What is your revenue derived from? The employers contributed, and, if that went on long enough, the fund must become solvent, because there have been large sums falling in from unclaimed estates and wages of deceased islanders, fines, and a small amount from the re-agreement fees.

3837. *By Mr. Paget*: The great falling off in revenue has been due to the fact that you have had no capitation fees paid to the department for three years, and it is from those fees that you are practically working the department? Yes.

3838. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did the capitation fees cover the expenses of the department? They covered it fairly well from the time I took charge. It was then working into a solvent condition, but it had been very heavily depleted before.

3839. On your own showing, it was not solvent in 1901, when the Commonwealth legislation came into force? It was gradually improving.

3840. The £5 a head which was deposited for the return of the islanders went into the fund? Yes; but the fund has had to pay out large sums at various times for purposes which were not *bona fide* charges upon it. For instance, an agitation was got up against the islanders on account of leprosy, and the examination which was made cost nearly £1,000, and I think they only discovered one or two lepers. Then, large numbers of "boys" were sent home at various times before I took charge, and that cost money.

3841. And since your time? The £500 a year to the schools was a drain on the fund.

3842. Have you at any time had sufficient money in hand to pay £5 for the return of every islander in Queensland? I cannot remember exactly, but possibly not.

3843. In 1898, for instance, you had about 8,000 "boys" in Queensland—Had you then £40,000 in the fund? No.

3844. *By Mr. Paget*: Then a large number of those were indentured "boys," for whom the return passages had not been paid to the fund—the employers were responsible for them? —

3845. *By the Chairman*: But there should always be £5 in the fund for every islander in Queensland? The £5 does not come in until the three years' agreement has expired.

3846. *By Mr. Nielson*: The number of islanders now in Queensland represent a sum of £28,000 for which the department is liable? Yes.

3847. Then there is a shortage of about £18,000? Yes.

1848. Has there not always been a shortage? Yes; but it has been decreasing.

3849. If it went on for another twenty years, and, instead of the "boys" going back they remained in Queensland till they died, you might have a solvent fund? Yes; we would make it up in time.

3850. *By Mr. Paget*: The deficit was very much greater at the time the hospitals were shut down than it is at present? Yes.

3851. The deficit was partly brought about by the hospital experiment? If we had what the hospitals owe us we would have about £32,000 now.

3852. You are responsible for about £28,000? Yes. Of course we shall never have to pay that. You can take off £6,000 of that for "exempt boys," and you can take off for all the boys who have died recently. We do not give the employer back his money now.

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3853. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did you ever give it back? Yes, we have paid back thousands of pounds.

3854. When was that stopped? Two or three years ago.

3855. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything more? I would just like to read some notes I have here. They came in in answer to one question, but I did not read it because we got on to something else.

3856. Will you write a letter embodying your views on the whole subject? Yes. A question was put by Mr. Nielson about the liability of employers for returned passages. It looks to the outside public as if the department were making a mistake, and I would like to clear that up.

3857. *By Mr. Nielson*: I do not think that, because I just told you what it looked like, and it struck me forcibly that the department had neglected it. Well, I would like to read this letter, which was addressed to all the inspectors of Pacific Island labour on the 23rd July, 1886:—

Circular to Inspectors of Pacific Islanders.

Pacific Island Labour Office,

Brisbane, 23rd July, 1886.

SIR,—A question having arisen as to the right of the people who were introduced from the islands of the New Ireland Archipelago some three years since, to enter into further agreements, and also as to the practice to be followed in respect to the return passage for these men, I have the honour to inform you that they may re-engage if they so desire, in which case you will require the deposit of £5 by the first employer, as provided in section 23. Act 1880.

You will be careful in cases where, at the close of the first agreements, these islanders elect to remain, to explain fully to them that their first employer being willing and ready to perform his contract and provide them a passage, they must, if they do not choose to avail themselves of it, themselves bear any cost of a return passage in excess of £5, whenever they desire to return.

I have, &c.,

(Sgd.) A. WOODWARD, Officer in Charge.

3858. *By Mr. Nielson*: What followed on that?—Since then your department has been advised by the Crown Law Department that that instruction was wrong, and that the employer was liable to pay any expenditure over the £5? Yes; that is within the last month. Here is another letter which I would like to read. It was also addressed to the Inspectors of Pacific Islanders:—

Brisbane, 12th February, 1890.

SIR,—It view of the difficulties that may possibly surround the question of the return of islanders after the 31st December next, I have the honour to direct your attention to the necessity for the exercise of the most diligent care in fully informing islanders (as from time to time their term of three-year service expires) of the contingency that may arise in regard to the cost of their return passage after that date should they, at the expiration of their term, elect to remain in the colony. When an islander decides to stay, and his employer, as a consequence, deposits £5 with the Government for his passage, the contract made with him may be considered at an end. You will be good enough, therefore, to point out, individually, to those who may make choice of remaining, that they do so at the risk of themselves having to pay any sum in excess of £5 which may be required to defray the cost of their return after 31st December. You will be pleased, from this forward, to put, at the foot of the usual jerque of a shipment, a certificate that you have fully explained to each one of those who makes choice of remaining, the risk he assumes in so doing. You will, further, be good enough to acknowledge the receipt of this circular, and state that you fully understand its purport.

I have, &c.,

(Sgd.) A. WOODWARD, Officer in Charge.

I read that to show that we followed what we considered the interpretation of the law at the time, and what we considered was equitable.

Mr. Nielson: It all depends upon which point of view you looked at it, as equity is all a matter of point of view.

Mr. Paget: The employer was prepared to carry out his bond. The islander said, "I do not desire to go home, and you can pay the £5 to the Government." The islander was then told that if he did not go home it might cost him more than £5 to go later on.

3859. *By the Chairman*: You will send us that letter? Yes. I would like to say that I noticed in Bundaberg a statement was made about the celerity with which we issued passes. Well, we only issued twenty-five passes a month.

NOTE:—The following letter was subsequently written to the Commission, to be embodied in Mr. Brennan's evidence:—

Department of Immigration,

Pacific Island Labour Branch.

Brisbane, 20th April, 1906.

To the Sugar Industry Labour Royal Commission.

GENTLEMEN,—I have the honour to submit the following summary of the evidence given by me before your Commission on the 10th instant, with some additions which may be of possible service:—

Pacific Island Labour.

The number of islanders for whom this State is responsible (including some 350 resident in the Tweed River district, New South Wales) is 6,389.

Departures to their homes during last year, 933. Number expected to return home during the current year, from 1,200 to 1,500. Respecting this estimate, it is impossible to make anything like a definite statement, because engagements for any term up to 31st December next are allowable.

On the 31st December, 1905, there were 6,821 islanders here, of whom 411 have since gone home, and 21 have died.

The number of indentured or three-year islanders at present under agreement is 664.

Their agreements expire thus:—

In April ...	189
July ...	139
September ...	76
October ...	155
November ...	48
December ...	57

664

This comparatively smallness of the number of what are known as "new chum" or oversea "boys" is more apparent than real, because a number of those recruited at the end of the recruiting period, by mutual consent, broke their first agreement and reagreed with their employers at higher wages and for terms carrying them to the end of 1906.

Reagreements.

These cover, as far as returns at present to hand, 2,800 "boys" at wages varying from 9s. to 15s. per week and found, or an average rate of about 11s. per week, and they expire during the current year as follows:—

In April ...	177
May ...	109
June ...	36
July ...	39
August ...	29
September ...	17
October ...	43
November ...	117
December ...	2,233

2,800

It is quite probable that a large proportion of them will renew their engagements, and so swell the number expiring in December.

From these figures it would at first appear that there are 15.78 per cent. of the whole island population unemployed; but, remembering the exemptions, those leasing land, and the number on the Tweed, the "walkabouts," or idle people may be estimated at under 25 per cent. These should be considered as undecided as to their future movements. Many will embrace opportunities as they occur of going home, and the rest will be tempted by offers of short agreements and high wages.

They are engaging now. The agreements made since 1st January affect upwards of 500, at periods of from six to nine months.

Married People.

Estimated to be 380, of whom probably 150 are married to Europeans, aboriginal natives of Queensland, and natives of Pacific Islands other than their own. The number of white women included in the foregoing is said to be twenty-three; of their offspring, you will more readily learn the particulars in the districts where they reside. There are no children of these marriages in the Brisbane District.

It is at least probable that 200 of these married folks will desire to remain in Queensland, and it may be fairly concluded that any attempt to deport them will be harsh in the extreme.

All islanders who came here before the passing of the *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901*, were brought upon the distinct understanding that they had the right of remaining if they wished, and, presumably, have shaped their mode of living accordingly.

Deportation.

This cannot take place before the 1st January, 1907. The present voluntary returning does not come under that head.

No arrangements have yet been made by which to carry out deportation.

Respecting its danger to islanders, it is almost impossible to assess it.

There is a percentage of "boys" who left their country to save their lives for various offences against native law. Whether some of these may ever safely venture back to their own places is probably only ascertainable by the "boys" themselves after personal inquiries have been made at their "passages"; the number affected, however, is probably small. Then there are those whose tribes or villages since they left have been vanquished by enemies; their positions also it is difficult to gauge. They and their friends probably will enjoy a very small share, if any, of the fruits of their labour in Queensland; but I am inclined to think that the danger of actual loss of life in these cases is apt to be exaggerated.

The danger of starvation by the landing of large numbers at a time is one upon which opinions are much divided. There is one thing certain, however, that on many occasions the logs of Government Agents have contained such entries as "Native food is very scarce" or "Impossible to purchase native food"; and I know that in recruiting days the unusual success of a vessel was often accounted for by the alleged scarcity of food at the islands. That might mean famine, or it might mean no surplus means wherewith to buy tobacco, &c.; and therefore boys recruited to secure the usual present of "trade," and thus supply the immediate wants of their friends. On that point I have no doubt, however, that the Commission will hear evidence from other sources which will allow of a fair judgment being formed. To provide each shipment of returns with sufficient food to prevent any possible hardship would be a very large order, and I think the idea as a general thing may be dismissed as impracticable.

Respecting the island of Malaya—and we are concerned in it to the extent of 2,500 people—I have strong doubts as to the competence of anyone in Queensland, or even Australia, to speak with authority as to the conditions under which the hill or bush tribes live. I have noticed one fact which bears on this

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question, and that is that all shipments of returns passing through my hands, after doing hard work here for fully three years, were 50 per cent better in appearance than the incoming shipments of recruits have been. Of course, you must consider in the case of the latter sea sickness (possibly) and strange diet.

If these people are to go at once (I mean *en masse* at the beginning of 1907), I think they should be sent in vessels carrying from 400 to 600, and to avoid the risk of mischievous conspiracy, should belong to different groups, notwithstanding the fact that many people think there is no danger. One Government Agent only will be required; we have had in the past quite enough experience of two to satisfy me that one responsible officer is the best practice. Two boats as at present I fancy are sufficient, though Government Agents may differ from me on this point.

The ship should sail from the appointed port or ports on a given date, and I think should be guaranteed a minimum number of passengers at the price agreed upon. When "boys" once saw that the ships would not, as now, submit to delays owing to their erratic behaviour, those who had not made up their minds to resist deportation would go aboard promptly.

To get ships of any size (they should be steamers) to enter this trade at the rate of £5 per head some definite terms must be made. Owners will not enter expensive vessels upon a "sporting" business such as this has been and still is.

I would like to add here that the business of deportation, when it does occur, in my opinion, should remain under the control of the Queensland Government; the latter is morally responsible for the due performance of contracts entered into under its supervision at the islands with every islander who came here. I need not enlarge on that, because a reference to the agreement forms used—Schedules G and I to the Act—will give you all the particulars of the obligation.

The Government Agents deputed to supervise the work should also be men who from previous experience understand all difficulties. For instance, the passenger list of a vessel carrying returns will show a certain islander as belonging to a certain "passage." When the ship goes to or near that place, the Government Agent will discover, if he knows his work, that the "boy" does not belong to that "passage," and will find that he ran away from his own place to recruit where he was picked up, or that he happened to be staying there with friends, or possibly the "boy" may have some other reason for not desiring to be returned there.

To me, one of the difficult phases of the deportation question arises from the fact that on the 1st January, 1907—presuming that the law will remain as it is at present—all islanders not specially exempted will be liable to be deported, and will not be allowed to work under any circumstances between the last day of December, 1906, and the day upon which they may be able to go on board a ship and return home. What is to be done with them? Any attempt to barrack such a crowd of idle "boys" at given centres will be courting serious difficulties.

As to whether deportation *en masse* should take place in the interests of the sugar industry I do not hesitate to say no!

I would suggest that, if practicable, the islanders who have been in the State for five years and under should be allowed to re-engage for six months, those resident for a period of less than ten years, twelve months, and the balance for two years.* I think these reengagements should all be accompanied by bonds, or, better still, a substantial capitation fee of £1, £2, and £3. The employer should be compelled to find a passage for the islander. Each batch of agreements would expire upon one date, so that there would be no insurmountable difficulty. All employers should be members of recognised associations in their districts. No leasing of land should be permissible in the case of non-exempt Pacific Islanders.

The ledger balances of the Pacific Islanders' Fund, from which the cost of deportation must be drawn, stood at the 31st March, 1906, thus—

			£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
		Cr.						
Deceased Islanders' Estates	...	...	6,662	10	9			
Return passages	...	...	38,656	0	6			
						45,318	11	3
		Dr.						
General purposes	...	...	13,168	17	7			
Hospitals	...	...	21,530	0	10			
						34,698	18	5
						£10,619	12	10

At the first blush it looks, taking the total number of islanders in the State—6,389—as if the Government would have to find something like £22,000, but if you reduce the number certain and probable to require return passages by exemptions 652, those whose return passages are not yet due for collection 661, and allow something like 950 as those who will not be called upon to go, and deaths between 1st January and 31st December, the liability of the department is very heavily reduced.

All return passages collected stand as a credit under its own heading, and I take it that the Government of Queensland, having accepted the responsibility of running special hospitals for the islanders, which created the heavy loss standing to the debit of that account, it will, when necessary, carry out any liability to the fund which may exist, up to £5 per head for each islander going home. The hospitals referred to all ceased to exist before I had anything to do with the department in 1891. Section 10 of the Act of 1885 gives the necessary authority for all that has been done in this connection.

The main object in suggesting an extension of the date for deportation upon a sliding scale, is to give the industry time to obtain a supply of labour to replace the islander.

I do not think that more than 2,000 whites suitable for the work will be available in the near future.

To expect the whole of the floating unemployed to contribute towards filling the breach would, I submit, be too sanguine, and, needless to say, the industry cannot be subjected to any risky experiment.

* Agreements to expire on 30th June, 1907; 31st December, 1907; and 31st December, 1908.

"The Land Acts and Agricultural Lands Purchase Acts Amendment Act of 1905" and "The Special Agricultural Selections Act of 1905" will no doubt ultimately assist in supplying labour to the sugar-grower, but whatever the extent of such benefit may be, comparatively speaking it is too far off to be considered now.

The labour following the pastoral industry cannot be counted upon. The two industries are separated by distance, and the times of demand clash. The wheat harvest on the Downs might benefit by a surplus of labour in the sugar districts of the South, but their periods of demand also clash.

I notice that several witnesses, speaking on the subject of white labour, have advocated the establishment of a Labour Bureau on business lines. What they mean I do not quite know, but it is a fact that a Labour Bureau with ample machinery has been in existence for many years, and that it has not been more used is due to the fact that generally the employers have not been confronted with the necessity for doing so. In large centres it worked well; in Toowoomba so well that the officer who had charge of it, when retrenched, took the business with him and is still making a living out of it.

If there is a crisis owing to the departure of the islander, the bureau will be called into requisition. To make a success of it, officers who have proper time to devote to the work and take an interest in it, will be necessary. Employers will require to register months beforehand the number of men they will want, and be ready to sign them on at an appointed time. Cheap steamer fares I fancy can be obtained where numbers are sure to travel. As to who is to pay them is a matter for arrangement between the parties concerned. I do not think the officers of the bureau should act as agents for employers in cases of this sort, because some disputes in court are possible, and into those they should not be drawn.

The bureau and its advantages to all parties should be thoroughly advertised, and the officer in charge be allowed a free hand in doing it. A limit as to the amount he could spend would, of course, be necessary. The Advertising Board could certify as to the reasonableness of prices, but otherwise he should be free from its control, and free to go to his Minister direct whether he is only a sub-head or not.

The State, as well as employers who think the Labour Bureau a useful institution to them, should consider whether the present issue of rations to travelling labour ought to continue. While it does so the Labour Bureau will be handicapped. The same men are passing through the various towns and stations and being counted perhaps two or three times over, besides which it is quite impossible to direct the flow of labour while men can get food for nothing upon any route they like to travel. It is a very old practice, and the means of providing in many cases labour at the employer's door practically free of expense and trouble of sending anywhere for it, and so any alteration will probably be difficult until closer settlement gradually causes its disappearance.

I have, &c.,

J. O'N. BRENNAN, Immigration Agent.

ARTHUR HUGH NEVILLE USSHER, Government Agent, examined :

3860. *By the Chairman:* You are a Government agent in the employ of the Queensland Government? Yes.

3861. And you have been so for how many years? For eighteen years.

3862. You are actively engaged in the business now? Yes.

3863. You are thoroughly familiar with both the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands, and the conditions prevailing there at the present time? Yes.

3864. Speaking with regard to those conditions, can you give us your opinion as to the wisdom of immediately deporting 5,000 or 6,000 men to those islands, or any of that number? Yes.

3865. You know the position, three-fourths of those who are here are Solomon Island "boys," and the rest are natives of the New Hebrides? Well, I think that to deport a large number of Solomon Island "boys" to their islands would mean that there would be a big risk of shortage of food.

3866. Are the natives of the Solomon Islands in the habit of storing up their food, or are they in the habit of doing what we are told, namely, living from hand to mouth? They just live from hand to mouth.

3867. What would be the position as regards the New Hebrides? It would depend a good deal on the climate. I have been at the New Hebrides and have not been able to buy a single yam.

3868. It would depend on the season? Yes.

3869. When would food be most plentiful in the islands in a normal season? About April or May.

3870. And how long would that plenty last—when would food get scarce again? It would last till about September.

3871. There are certain months known as the hurricane season in the New Hebrides, when it is advisable not to trade there in sailing boats? Yes, the hurricane season there corresponds with the north-west season here. They are always liable to get a hurricane.

3872. Hurricanes generally occur in January, February, and March? Yes.

3873. In that case do you think it would be unwise to undertake the deportation of the kanakas in those months? I would not say it would not be wise, because you have to risk all these sort of things. I have been there once or twice when there were hurricanes, and I have also seen hurricanes in April.

3874. Do the boats recruit in these months at the New Hebrides, as a rule? No. They used to do so in the very old days, and then there was an interval, and later on it was taken up again.

3875. *By Mr. Paget:* That is in the New Hebrides? And in the Solomons, too.

3876. *By the Chairman:* But the seasons have not been normal for the last three years, and there have not been any monsoons? That is so.

3877. Is there any material difference in the rates of marine insurance with respect to ships visiting the islands during the hurricane months? I have heard the captains of vessels say there was an increased rate, but I do not know it myself.

3878. That would lead one to suppose there was a greater risk of loss? Yes.

3879. That would only leave you six months in which a plentiful food supply and favourable weather would permit of trading with the islands? Yes.

3880. We have heard a good deal of some trading stations in the Solomons where labour is employed—Can you inform us as to the likelihood of "boys" being engaged there? They recruit a good deal on Florida for Messrs. Lever Brothers, of Sydney.

3881. *By Mr. Paget:* That firm have a number of plantations? Yes.

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A. H. N.
USSHER.

10 April, 1906.

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3882. Where are they? They have all Captain Swensson's places.
3883. On Guadalcanar? They have one on Guadalcanar, but their head station is at Gavutu, on Florida.
3884. *By the Chairman:* Have you any knowledge of the conditions under which the islanders are engaged?—Are their interests properly safeguarded by the Imperial Government? Yes. It is all carried on under Mr. Woodford's supervision.
3885. Do you know whether those stations are likely to absorb any considerable number of the Malayta "boys" who are now in Queensland, in the event of a shortage of food in their own island? I could not say; but I do not think the Malayta men will go anywhere but to their own island, although they are frightened about going there.
3886. Would it be any use lauding a supply of food with the returned "boys" and putting it in the charge of the chief? It would only breed more trouble, and I do not think it would do any good.
3887. *By Mr. Paget:* Will you state your reasons? The bush men would very likely murder the chief. They would loot the stores, anyway.
3888. *By the Chairman:* Then the only way of guarding against hardship among the islanders would be to repatriate them by degrees? That would be the wiser plan.
3889. Can you say what number of men could be returned to Malayta in six months? 300 or 400.
3890. It would not be safe to do it more rapidly than that? Not in Malayta.
3891. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is not Malayta a very populous island? Yes; it is thickly populated.
3892. It is 100 miles long by about 30 miles wide? In places it is only 10 miles wide.
3893. It would average about 20 miles? Yes.
3894. Four hundred returned "boys" would be only a drop in the bucket compared with the total population of the island? Yes; but it is an island which is always rather bare of food.
3895. That is on the coast? I do not know anything about the interior.
3896. You know that a great many of the Malayta "boys" in Queensland belong to the bush tribes? They are nearly all bush men.
3897. There is always plenty food where they come from, so they say? I do not think much reliance can be placed upon what they say. They often tell us there is plenty of food in a place, but we cannot get it.
3898. But you only visit the coast? Just so; but the coast people obtain most of their food from the bush tribes.
3899. Then they will not have large stocks to sell to labour vessels? No; just about enough for a meal.
3900. You do not know how much the bush men have? I attend the markets, and they do not seem to have much to sell.
3901. *By the Chairman:* You come in contact with the hill tribes at the markets? Yes.
3902. *By Mr. Nielson:* The hill tribes will only bring down what they are likely to dispose of in the markets? That may be so, but I never heard of their storing anything.
3903. Have you ever heard from missionaries or traders on Malayta any estimate of the population of the island? No; the missionaries have not been there till recently, and there are no traders there.
3904. Have the Malayta "boys" now in Queensland made any appreciable difference in the population? We do not notice very much difference.
3905. You do not penetrate very far into the interior? No.
3906. And therefore you cannot tell? No.
3907. *By the Chairman:* We have been told that when these "boys" land they will have to start and clear land and make gardens for themselves before the food supply can be materially increased, and that that will take three months or more—Do you know anything about that? No.
3908. Do you know Sandwich, in the New Hebrides? Yes.
3909. We are told there are a lot of European settlers there. Would they be likely to absorb much labour? I expect they would, because they send their vessels round the rest of the group recruiting for labour.
3910. *By Mr. Paget:* They only recruit in the New Hebrides? That is all.
3911. Not from the Solomons? No.
3912. *By the Chairman:* Sandwich is a quiet island, and there would be no danger in landing islanders who do not belong to Sandwich? None whatever.
3913. Would that apply to Eromanga, Tanna, and other islands in the New Hebrides? I think it would to Eromanga. They sometimes plough up a little land.
3914. Would it apply to Api? You could land "boys" on Api. There are about the same number of French settlers on Api as on Sandwich.
3915. How many islanders could the three vessels now engaged in the trade return in a year? About 2,400. They ought to be able to make a trip in two months.
3916. Allowing for three months during which it is advisable to stop work, that would be about 2,000? Yes.
3917. You have just returned from the Solomons? Yes; last week.
3918. Are the islanders there cognisant of the fact that the "boys" in Queensland are to be sent back? They hardly believe it yet.
3919. They know it is mooted? Yes; but often they do not believe you when you tell them. They think that the white man cannot or will not do the work, and that they will be brought back again.
3920. Have they any feeling on the subject? I could get a shipful of recruits at any time.
3921. Have they any feeling with regard to the compulsory return of the "boys"? I never heard any of them speak of it.
3922. *By Mr. Paget:* You have not heard any threats about it? No. I have not been in the Hebrides since the Act was passed. There may be threats down there, but there are none in the Solomons.
3923. Presuming that the natives knew absolutely that a large number of "boys" were to be returned this year, would they make provision for supplying those "returns" with food? Not a bit of it.
3924. Would they not plant anything beforehand if they thought their friends were returning? No.
3925. Supposing you lauded twenty islanders at a village where there was not sufficient food to maintain them as well as the inhabitants of the village, how long would it be before the returned "boys" could grow sufficient food for themselves? They have only one crop of yams and bananas a year. Cocoanuts they could get; but they do not plant cocoanuts to any extent in Malayta.

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3926. I understand the yam takes about twelve months to mature? Yes.
3927. When is it planted? I do not know exactly, but I think it is taken up in March or April. On Malaya they do not store the yams very much. I once asked a chief why they did not make gardens, and he said that, if he did, the bushmen would come down and kill him and eat up his crops.
3928. *By Mr. Nielson:* That might be, because the bushmen want him to buy his food from them. If he grew his own yams, the bushmen could not get any fish or salt water?—
3929. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything else you would like to say? I heard Mr. Brennan speak of a mission station at Feu. It is a swamp at the back of the beach on the east coast of Malaya. Mr. Williams was the white missionary there. The natives killed a native teacher twelve months ago, and another very recently, and they shot the recruiter on one of the labour vessels. The missionaries say it is all right now, because it is a missionary "passage."
3930. In your opinion, it is not a suitable place for a settlement from a health point of view? No; there is a big swamp at the back of it.
3932. Can you tell us if it is true, as we have been told, that children born in Queensland—that is, the offspring of these islanders—are especially susceptible to malaria down there? The natives down there have told me that children are very susceptible to malaria.
3933. I suppose the mortality is pretty heavy? Yes. Most of the white people get the fever, and it is the same with the children.
3934. *By Mr. Paget:* I suppose that during the last two years, during which no recruiting has been in vogue, you have not had so much opportunity of learning about the islanders as before? No; we do not make any stay. We take the "boys" ashore, and leave them there. Their friends come around them, and we go back.
3935. *By the Chairman:* What is your opinion of the outrages that are committed, from time to time, on "boys" from some vessels—do you think these reported outrages have any foundation in fact? No, I do not think so. In regard to the "Clansman" incident, I asked the officials under Mr. Woodford, and they never heard of it, and I asked Mr. Woodford, and he never heard of it either.
3936. Did you not hear the evidence to that effect of white people of apparent veracity; in spite of that you do not believe it? No, I never did believe it.
3937. *By Mr. Paget:* You have had a great experience in those islands? Yes.
3938. *By the Chairman:* And it must have been heard of in the islands? Yes.
3939. *By Mr. Nielson:* I suppose your experience in the islands has shown you that human nature in a kanaka is much the same as in any other race—that is, they welcome their friends after an absence of some years just as people of other races welcome their friends? They welcome their boxes.
3940. But the friends of the "boys" are pleased to see them back? You cannot tell whether they are or not, as when a man is landed on the beach no one shakes hands with him or takes the slightest notice of him.
3941. *By Mr. Paget:* It has been suggested that the welcome extends only until the boxes are finished? Yes, I believe that is so.
3942. *By Mr. Nielson:* That is not altogether confined to kanakas? No.
3943. *By Mr. Paget:* There has been some suggestion that the whole of the Solomon islanders in this State should be deported to one particular place in the Solomons under the control of the present Resident Commissioner? Yes.
3944. Do you think it would be a wisething for Queensland to adopt such a method of repatriating islanders like that? No.
3945. *By Mr. Nielson:* It would be a breach of contract with the "boys" to do that? Yes, and how would you feed them?
3946. *By Mr. Paget:* We are under contract to land him at or near his own "passage"? Yes.
3947. *By the Chairman:* And it would be a distinct breach of contract to land him anywhere but at his own "passage"? Yes.
3948. And any action of that sort would be likely to lead to reprisals on the part of the islanders? Yes.
3949. *By Mr. Paget:* Would the Resident Commissioner be able to more easily land these islanders at their own "passages" than you people who have been in the trade for many years? I do not think so.
3950. Does the Resident Commissioner in the Solomon Islands put an Imperial Government agent on board each boat? No; I have acted three times as Imperial Government agent.
3951. Whilst you were also acting for the Queensland Government you acted for the Imperial Government at the request of Mr. Woodford? Yes.
3952. *By the Chairman:* We have read the regulations and they do not say anything at all about an Imperial Government agent being put on board when the islanders are being returned, but only when recruiting is taking place? That is so. The Resident Commissioner asks us to act for him, and to search the boxes and things of the "boys" to see if they have any firearms.
3953. *By Mr. Paget:* When you acted as Imperial Government agent were you paid a fee? Yes, the ship had to pay me. I get it from the ship, and the Government get it from me.
3954. You are paid by the ship, you say, and the Queensland Government take it? Yes.
3955. You refund the money to the Queensland Treasury? Yes.
3956. *By the Chairman:* Then it does not go to the Imperial Treasury? No.
3957. And it is not looked on as part of the revenue of the island? No; it is the ship's license for returning labour. The license is £100 a year, paid in two instalments of £60 and £40.
3958. *By Mr. Paget:* In the event of large numbers of islanders being returned in one boat—say 400 or 500 islanders—do you think it would be more dangerous to the life of the crew than it is at the present time? No; you mean while we are at sea?
3959. Yes—While you are at sea, is there any danger of the islanders conspiring to seize the vessel? I do not think they would ever try that. There are such a lot of islanders belonging to different islands, and that is where the security lies. If anything of the kind were thought of they would all "sneak" on one another.
3960. After this year, do you think it would be wise for the authorities who are returning these islanders to see that better measures are taken for the security of the "boys" than there are at present—for instance, you have only one covering boat at present? We have two boats. I think the two boats can do it all right.
3961. Would you be afraid at the end of this year to continue in the same way as you are doing at present? Not a bit. I do not think it could be improved on.

G. R.
Townsend.

GEORGE ROBERT TOWNSEND, Officer connected with the Government Labour Bureau, Brisbane,
examined:

10 April, 1906.

3962. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am an officer connected with the Labour Bureau.
3963. How long have you been connected with that bureau? A good long time—fifteen or sixteen years—ever since it was started.
3964. Will you describe your method of registration, the organisation of the bureau, and the distribution of labour? When a man comes in search of work he gets his name registered, and if we have anything that he can do we send him to it.
3965. When he registers his name, what particulars does he give you? He gives his age, his condition, the name of the place where he worked last, how long he has been out of employment, and his address.
3966. If you know of any work you send him to it, otherwise you wait until the opportunity occurs and you communicate with him? Yes; he is generally asked to look in, and if they are out of employment they can generally find time to look in to see if there is anything for them.
3967. As regards the employers, in what way do they communicate with the bureau? If they are in town they come personally to us, and if they cannot come to town they write and ask us to select a man, after describing the sort of man they want.
3968. And as soon as you are able to find a suitable man for the employment you bring them together? Yes.
3969. Supposing a man in the country wants labour, how do the men manage to get there? We send the man to his employment by rail, and send a notice to his employer, and he deducts the cost of the railway fare out of the man's earnings, and refunds it to us.
3970. It is very rarely that they are able to pay their own fares? Very rarely.
3971. *By Mr. Paget*: In the event of a man being sent to work where there is no railway, and only steamer communication available, do you provide him with steamer passage? Not during the last few years.
3972. *By the Chairman*: In that case you require a guarantee from the employer that the steamer passage will be paid? Yes.
3973. What percentage of these railway passes that are issued to men going to work are refunded? I should say about 50 per cent.
3974. Have you any figures showing what number of men have been registered within any given period? They are registering now.
3975. Have you the figures about you? I have the number that were registered last month, showing how they were dealt with, and the balance unprovided for. Last month 209 persons were registered. Of these, 104 were sent to private employment, and 48 were sent to Government work, leaving 57 unprovided for on the 31st of March.
3976. How does that compare with previous months? That would be about a good average month.
3977. You were able to provide employment for about three-fourths of the men who applied for it? Yes.
3978. *By Mr. Paget*: Where do you send the men? The private employment is given to the single men, but all the Government employment is entirely for married men.
3979. Will you tell us what the Government employment is? Yes, clearing the land. It is called the Public Estate Improvement.
3980. *By the Chairman*: You have numerous branches of the bureau? Yes, every clerk of petty sessions is supposed to be an agent for the bureau.
3981. Each one of these agents keeps a register and registers the names of employees, and also deals with persons looking for labour? Yes.
3982. Wherever there is a court of petty sessions there is such an officer in existence? Yes; even if there are places where a considerable acts as clerk of petty sessions he will also do the work connected with the Labour Bureau.
3983. Do they report to you from time to time as to the labour they have on hand? Yes, every month. But these figures are not always reliable. To get the exact figures I sent a wire to all centres where there is a Labour Bureau, asking for the number of unemployed in their respective districts.
3984. About what date did you send that? About a week ago.
3985. This document [*holding up a document*] shows the replies that were sent to your telegram? Yes. [*Document tendered.*]
3986. *By the Chairman*: Roughly, this return shows 2,800 men out of employment throughout the State? Yes.
3987. That information is obtained as the result of a report from 132 branches of your bureau? Yes.
3988. And it does not include the number of unemployed about Brisbane? No.
3989. At what number do you estimate the number of unemployed in Brisbane? That is a hard thing to get at because lately I have had openings for married men to go out in these gangs and I have had some difficulty in getting the number I required. Last week I wanted twelve men for Roma and I could only get four. I am going to have another piece of work ready as soon as the holidays are over and I shall be able to put on forty men.
3990. You cannot form an estimate of the number of unemployed in Brisbane? Well, in the sugar season I should say that from 100 to 150 men come to the bureau to get to the sugar districts.
3991. Roughly speaking, how many unemployed are there in Brisbane at present? There are fifty or sixty who come into the Labour Bureau.
3992. *By Mr. Paget*: Only fifty or sixty? That is all I have come in contact with. In fact, that return of mine will show you the number that come to the bureau and are left unprovided for.
3993. *By the Chairman*: At Geraldton, I see that your agent says there are twenty unemployed, and he adds a memo, saying, "These men can get work if they wish it"? Yes.
3994. Then, at Muttaburra, your agent says there are forty unemployed; but he makes a note that there will be no unemployed three weeks hence—He evidently knows of something that will absorb all the surplus labour there? Yes. And in some cases the agents quote as unemployed, numbers of men who are passing through their districts.
3995. Then there is a danger of some men being quoted twice? Not in that return, because I gave them very little time to answer my wire.

3996. That is rather valuable information—Can you tell us how many agricultural labourers have been introduced into Queensland in the last twelve months? I do not know that; the Immigration Agent will be able to answer that.

G. R.
Townsend.

10 April, 1906.

3997. What is the ruling rate of wages for agricultural labourers? 12s. to 15s. a week and found.

3998. Is that the rate on the Darling Downs, or on this side of the range? All over. Some start at a lower wage than that, and their wages are raised if they prove satisfactory.

3999. *By Mr. Paget*: I understood you to say that that is the ruling rate of wages in the North? No; all over the Southern district. I think that north from Bundaberg it is from £1 to 25s. a week and found.

4000. *By the Chairman*: Can you give us any idea of the number of white labourers who will be available for work when the sugar season comes on? During the sugar season there are from 100 to 150 men who visit the bureau for the purpose of trying to get passes to the sugar districts. That is as near as I can tell you. A good many men are engaged direct by employers, and go back year after year.

4001. Do you find that men prefer harvesting the cane crop to harvesting the wheat crop? Yes.

4002. How do the wages compare? They get about 6s. a day for the wheat harvest and five meals a day, and in the sugar districts they get about £1 a week and found, and still they prefer the sugar, judging by the number of applications.

4003. Do you know the reason for that? Some of the wheat farmers want the men to work on Sundays, and the hours are longer than in the cane harvest.

4004. Do they not pay extra for the Sunday work? Yes; but the men want the rest.

4005. Have you had any applications from employers in the extreme North for white labour for the sugar-fields? No direct applications; but yesterday Mr. Boyd, of Ripple Creek, called at the office and told me that there was an opening for about 500 men, and he wanted the Government to take the risk of sending them up.

4006. Did he say what wages he would give? From £1 to 25s. a week and found for field work.

4007. Did he say what he would give during the cane season? Yes; but the difficulty was in connection with the passages.

4008. He was not prepared to pay for their passages? No. I think he wanted the Government to take the risk, the amount of the passage money to be deducted from the wages of those who landed. We were to have the risk, and he was to derive the benefit.

4009. The Government take the risk to the extent of 50 per cent. in connection with railway passes? Yes, but the railways are their own. We would have to pay the shipping companies. Mr. Willcocks tried to get a lot of men to work inland from Cairns, and he paid their fares up, but some of them got off at intermediate ports, and he was let in for the passage money.

4010. Can you offer any suggestion as to how the deficiency in the supply of labour for the sugar industry, caused by the repatriation of the 6,000 Pacific Islanders now in Queensland, can be made up? I believe a large number will go direct from the southern States.

4011. The 2,800 men you speak of will not replace 6,000 islanders, even if you get them all? You cannot take that as the number that will be available, because many of them are tradesmen and miners, and they will not work in the fields for the wage offered. Gympie shows 350 men unemployed, and Charters Towers 400.

4012. They would expect 8s. or 10s. a day? At any rate not less than 7s.

4013. Those two towns represent 30 per cent. of the whole number you mentioned? Yes.

4014. Do you keep records showing the periods of the year in which labour is engaged in the shearing, and in the sugar and wheat harvests? Shearing is more at the beginning of the year. In the sugar season the men start coming in numbers about August, and in October or November they go into the wheat harvest.

4015. Then the sugar and wheat harvests overlap? They are rather close together.

4016. Can anything be done to transfer surplus labour from one locality to another, as occasion may require?—I suppose the only way is to pay their passages? That is all.

4017. I believe Mr. Deshon is the head of your department—is it his wish that you should be here? Yes; he does not interfere with the working of the Labour Bureau; he confines himself entirely to the Public Estate Improvement Fund.

4018. Can you suggest any means by which labour may be attracted to and kept in the country? No, because in the sugar industry they do not require all the men in the off season who find employment in the crushing season. Down here there is always a steady demand for farm hands.

4019. Is there a bureau in South Brisbane? No.

4020. We heard at Gin Gin that some young fellows belonging to what was termed the "Woolloongabba push" had carried out a contract there very well—Can you suggest any means by which lads of that class can be induced to take up the work? The difficulty with that class is to get them away from the towns. There seems to be a fatal attraction for them in the towns.

4021. *By Mr. Paget*: These young fellows gave satisfaction, and earned good wages, too? Gin Gin employs good men. Some married men go there.

4022. *By the Chairman*: Can you furnish us with a return showing the wages offered for all descriptions of work? Yes. It would be a good idea, if the planters required men, for them to notify the Labour Bureau that they were open to take so many men, and we could then gather them together and send them up.

4023. Who would pay the carriage? We could send them by rail and pay the railage, and the employers could deduct the amount from the men's wages afterwards in the ordinary way.

4024. There will be a loss? There is sure to be a loss.

4025. Some of them would never go to the places to which they were sent? No. It would be an advantage to the employer and also to the Labour Bureau, because we could forward men at half the cost by railway. We only pay half fares when we send anyone away by rail, but the employers engaging men would have to pay full railway fare if they engaged the men direct.

4026. *By Mr. Paget*: You give them workmen's tickets? Yes.

4027. *By the Chairman*: All men sent by the bureau are allowed to travel at a reduced scale of fares? If they come from the bureau they just pay half the cost of their fare.

4028. Do you think it would be a good thing to establish rates like those when men are going to work? It is difficult to find out when men are going to work. It would be too wide to fix it like that.

G. R.
Townsend.
10 April, 1906.

4029. *By Mr. Nielson*: Supposing a man has a job to go to, it would only cost you a ninepenny wire to enable you to find out if he has got work? Yes.
4030. If a man can produce a telegram, showing that he has got employment at a certain place, would it not be a safe thing to give him a special rate? We could do that and pass him through the Labour Bureau. I always like to make certain myself, because lately I have had evidences of abuse by men trying to obtain railway passes.
4031. Supposing a man was engaged from your branch at Bundaberg, your officer there would know that he was engaged, so on an official acknowledgment of that kind would you recommend that men throughout Queensland should get a special workman's fare the same as they grant in the suburbs of Brisbane? Yes.
4032. Would you recommend a system of special workmen's tickets?—I mean a system whereby the men pay for their tickets, and not where the Government pays? I think so. That is being done now.
4033. It is being done as a matter of concession, but would not a special rate established for workmen be a good thing for the workmen? It would be a good thing for the workmen, but I doubt if it would be a good thing to establish.
4034. Why? It would be all right to those cases you refer to, but it is open to abuse.
4035. If the employers avail themselves of the bureau, and the men also avail themselves of it, would it not be a good thing to give them that cheap fare? Yes, I think so. Once they are proved to be genuine I would let them pass through at the same rate.
4036. Suppose a planter at Bundaberg asked the bureau there to send him twenty men, but the bureau had not got them, and they wired to you to forward the number of men required to Bundaberg, would you not advise forwarding them on at a reduced fare? Yes.
4037. *By Mr. Paget*: That is done now? Yes.
4038. *By the Chairman*: But Mr. Nielson's idea is that all workmen should be given reduced fare on the same terms as are given in the cases you refer to—Do you not think the Government would get more money that way than by trusting to the fare being repaid? I do not know.
4039. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would not the number of workmen who use the railway be increased if they were allowed specially reduced rates? There is no doubt about that.
4040. A greater number would travel in the train than instead of humping their swags? It would be to the advantage of the railways.
4041. *By the Chairman*: Is there a tendency on the part of the unemployed to concentrate themselves? Yes.
4042. And this would be an inducement to them to distribute themselves? Yes. I am glad the Minister has granted that half-fare business, as it is a good thing. When the employers find that we can send the men up at half the rate which they would have to pay themselves if they did not go through the bureau, they will see that it will be better to let them all go through the bureau. It will be better for both the employer and the employee.
4043. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you any suggestion to make with respect to the supply of labour after the end of this year, because, as you know, a certain number of islanders are to be deported and their places have to be filled?—In your opinion are there sufficient men in the State to take their places? I do not think you can get the number required in Queensland at present.
4044. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think that, if the Labour Bureau were properly organised in every large centre, these statistics would be more easily obtainable? I do. You see that at present it is done by the police all round. We all know that if you want a thing done well you have to pay for it. The police have plenty of other things to do, and you cannot expect them to give you accurate information about the bureau when they are called upon so constantly for other duties.
4045. Do you think that a periodical exchange between bureaux as to the statistics, both of men looking for work and work available, would be of benefit? Yes, I do. I think they ought to give quarterly returns.
4046. Would weekly returns be better? I do not think weekly returns would be of advantage.
4047. The Weather Bureau gets returns every day, and every day you can tell what the weather is at different centres, so would not it facilitate the exchange of labour if you knew each week how many were wanted at Bundaberg, and how many at Mackay?—Could they not communicate with the head office every week by wire? I do not believe in communicating every week unless they have something to report.
4048. If men happened to be in a town where there was no work they could easily see where work could be obtained at another town? Yes; and that could be communicated by letter or wire. It would be useless to ask the men to keep coming up and you tell them that there is nothing doing. Those who have an opening for men should communicate with the head office, and the oftener they did that the better it would be.
4049. Have you ever been stationed in an outside district? In respect to what?
4050. The Labour Bureau? No.
4051. An officer in an outside district told us that one difficulty he had was that after men registered he did not know where to find them, and in one instance when men were wanted they were camped a mile or so away, and he could not put his hands on them—Would the establishment of a depot where men could camp near the office facilitate the working of the bureau throughout Queensland? No; I think that abuse would creep in. Suppose a number of men who are known to the police here went up to Bundaberg they might get shelter without going to work. There are a crowd of that sort of men here.
4052. Could you not devise some means of getting over that? If you could only discriminate between the men, it would be all right; but you cannot do it in the large towns.
4053. But the police know most of these habitual criminals and soakers? Yes; but they might be going to a place where the police know nothing about them, and the police would have to wait until they turned out to be bad.
4054. You understand that in the southern part of Queensland sometimes the harvesting season starts suddenly, owing to frosts? Yes.
4055. Can you devise some expeditions means of getting information in those centres as to where there is labour available? Yes; let them wire to the head office, and we can insert an advertisement in the papers that men are required at once. I frequently receive wires from Bundaberg for so many men, and I have supplied them.

4056. *By the Chairman*: I presume that any suggestion you would make as to the more efficient working of your bureau would go to the head of your department? Yes.

G. R.
Towdard.

4057. You do that from time to time? I do not think there is any improvement to be made. We do everything we possibly can.

10 April, 1906.

4058. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you conversed with men who have worked in a sugar district as to whether they are likely to return to that sugar district in the sugar season? Yes, some of them return repeatedly. I have one case now. A married man has been working during the off season on the improvement of the public estate, but he has given that up now, and is off to Gin Gin for the sugar season. I saw a letter showing that work was offered to him at the rate of £1 a week.

4059. *By the Chairman*: From the conversations you have had with these men, do you think that any of them will settle on the land there in such a way that their labour will be available if required? A good few of them would. They would be glad to get a home of their own if they could do it.

4060. That is if they could only get a start? Yes.

4061. They are handicapped by having no money to buy land? Yes.

4062. Do you think there is a sufficient percentage of men who would go on the land to make it reasonably safe to assist them in doing so? I think so. We have a number of men working in connection with our Public Estate Improvement Fund now.

4063. Where do they live? All about Brisbane.

4064. They are all 7s. a day men? Yes.

4065. It would be less expensive for a man to have a home of his own where he could work? Yes; it is always more expensive for a man to go away from home, and he has to keep himself while he is away. I would like to mention that early in March I received a telegram from the Immigration Agent at Mackay, telling me that at the end of May there would be plenty of work in the Mackay district for 800 men at least.

4066. The 7s. 6d. would go a long way towards feeding a family, too? Yes.

4067. *By Mr. Paget*: On a small area labourers could grow vegetables and raise poultry, and so on, if they could be assisted to settle in the sugar districts? Yes.

(Rockhampton.)

SATURDAY, 14 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*)

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

FRANCIS HOPKINS, Bookseller, examined:

4068. *By the Chairman*: What is your business? I am a bookseller.

4069. You have for many years taken a great interest in the Pacific Islanders living about Rockhampton? Yes; for the last four or five years.

F. Hopkins.

14 April, 1906.

4070. I understand that you have a written statement which you wish to read to the Commission? Yes.—I desire respectfully to bring before you my observation of North Rockhampton Pacific Islanders during the last few years, and to express my opinion that their forced removal would entail unnecessary hardship, and bring disgrace on the Government, if carried out according to the letter of the present Commonwealth law. The islanders residing in this neighbourhood are mostly old residents. About half have "exemption" tickets. Most of their wives are island women, or Queensland born. A few have married white women. A good many are single. There are some children born in Queensland, both parents being islanders; also a few half-castes. Those attending school are about the average in attainments. Most of these islanders are Christian people, and they show their individuality by attending, some the English, and some the Methodist, or other churches. Those having homes desire to remain here. I have been informed they are quiet neighbours. As they are not naturalised, freehold land has to be held by trustees; some, however, rent land on lease. Those who have not exemption tickets would like to receive the same privilege as the others. The "exempt" islanders, although secured by the Act of 1901, are much interested in their less fortunate brethren, who are liable to deportation any time after 31st December, 1906. They fear the great risk of sickness, through change of food, if sent back to the islands. Those now here originally came from a dozen or more different islands, and have been away from their birthplaces fifteen, twenty, or more years. I would suggest for consideration, that the Commonwealth Parliament should amend the Act, so as to provide, *inter alia*, that such islanders as apply, who have been in Queensland at least five years, and against whom no objection is made, should be recommended by the local magistrates for the privilege of exemption.

4071. *By Mr. Paget*: Are any of the half-castes you refer to the children of white mothers? A few.

JOSEPH BROADHURST BROCKLEHURST, Clergyman of the Church of England, examined:

4072. *By the Chairman*: You are a clergyman of the Church of England? Yes. Rector of St. Barnabas, North Rockhampton.

J. B.
Brocklehurst.

14 April, 1906.

4073. How long have you been in charge of the parish? Eighteen months.

4074. Amongst your congregation you have some Pacific Islanders? Most of those who generally reside in North Rockhampton are members of the congregation.

4075. Did you have any previous experience of Pacific Islanders? None whatever.

4076. Is there anything you can tell us that will be of any use to us? Since the Yepoon plantation closed, most of the "boys" now residing in North Rockhampton have had practically nothing to do with the sugar industry, and they have been earning their living by gardening and other means. About sixteen of them have their own houses and land. Seven of them are married to white women. As a result of these marriages, there about ten half-caste children, while there are about twenty-two full-blooded kanaka children.

4077. Do the children attend a day school? They mostly attend the North Rockhampton State School.

- J. B. Brookerhurst.
14 April, 1906.
4078. Do they get any religious instruction? Yes, in the Sunday schools.
4079. Do most of them attend Sunday schools? Yes.
4080. About how old is the eldest of the children? They range up to nineteen or twenty years of age.
4081. Both boys and girls? Yes.
4082. Are the islanders living in North Rockhampton quiet, law-abiding people, or the reverse? They are very quiet people. There has never been one case in my experience in which they have caused any trouble. Most of them are Christians.
4083. Are you of opinion that their continued residence in North Rockhampton would be disadvantageous to the white people in the locality? Most distinctly not.
4084. You admit that, though not engaged in the sugar industry, the men come into competition with white labourers to a certain extent? I admit that in a sense they do. Probably on the outskirts of the town they do to a greater degree. There are islanders at Coorooman and Tauby who have holdings on which they produce things which they send to the markets in Rockhampton; and in that way they come into competition with white men.
4085. By Mr. Paget: But they do not come into competition with the white labourer who is looking for work? No; because that class of people would probably not settle on the land. Seeing that seven of the islanders settled in North Rockhampton are married to white women, do you think the State will be justified in breaking, by separating these people, what I may term the law of God?
4086. By the Chairman: Have they all been married with religious rites? Yes, and according to the law of Queensland. Then there is the question of the children. They have been civilised and educated here, and are we justified in putting the clock of their lives back by deporting them to the islands and leaving them without any civilising or religious influences?
4087. You consider that the work of civilising them would be practically thrown away, or, at all events, that there would be risk of that? There would be a risk.
4088. If they went to mission stations, there would not be the same risk? Not if you were sure they would be sent there.
4089. By Mr. Nielson: Have any islanders gone to the islands as teachers? One or two have gone to New Guinea to teach, but none of late.
4090. Have any of these "boys" been married since you came here? Yes, I married one the other day. Do you mean married to white women?
4091. Yes, to white women? Oh, no. I think the whites have seen the disadvantages of those unions, and I think they have stopped it. The question is, If half-castes were left, would they themselves marry amongst whites? but I doubt it very much. I think the tendency would be to marry amongst themselves.
4092. Are none of the "boys" at North Rockhampton desirous to go home? Not one. They all wish to stay, and although most of them have not been working on the plantations, they are quite willing to do so if necessary.
4093. A lot of them are exempt? Yes, I think thirteen or fourteen of them are "ticket boys."
4094. Do you know if any of them are desirous of going to the islands as missionaries? Not one. Opportunities have been held out to them, but they deem it advisable to stay here.
4095. None of them wish to go to New Guinea? Not at present. There is no demand for them of late.
4096. Did those "boys" who went to New Guinea come from here? None came from the North side, but there have been two or three from the Southern parts of the State.
4097. By the Chairman: And not from here? No.

JAMES LARCOMBE, Butcher, examined:

- J. Larcombe.
14 April, 1906.
4098. By the Chairman: Do you reside in North Rockhampton? No, on this side of the river.
4099. What is your occupation? I am a butcher, but I am here as the representative of the Workers' Political Organisation.
4100. You have in your mind exactly what we are inquiring about, so perhaps you will say it and condense it as much as possible? I wish merely to offer a few suggestions in regard to the best means of getting a supply of white labour for the plantations, and also with regard to the deportation of the kanakas. Although this is not a sugar district, our organisation looks upon this matter from a white Australia standpoint, and as the Labour party have been very active in that direction, and it was due chiefly to the efforts of the Labour party that the white Australia policy has been adopted, we take a keen interest in it.
4101. We take it for granted that your presence here signifies that? Yes, we take it that there is likely to be serious trouble in the North in the near future unless the Queensland Government take prompt measures to supersede the kanaka labour.
4102. How would you suggest they should supersede the kanaka labour? I suggest that the Government ask the planters to send in, as early as possible, a statement showing the number of men they will require when the kanakas leave, and the dates when they will require those men. It would not be a good thing to send men up to these places before they are wanted. Then when the Government have got that information from the planters they can find out through the Labour Bureau and labour organisations in Queensland what number of men there will be likely to be available at that time. If there is not a sufficient number of men in Queensland, then we should get the Commonwealth Government to do the same thing in regard to the other States of the Commonwealth.
4103. You suggest that this information should also be obtained from the Commonwealth? Yes; provided there is not enough white labour in Queensland, and the State Government should pay the expenses of the men.
4104. You think the State Government should pay the expenses? Yes, but only so far as Queensland is concerned, and the Commonwealth Government could do the same for the men coming from the other States. Then the money could be partially or wholly refunded to the Government when the men got work, just according to the distance the man had to travel to get that work. I do not think it would be fair to make a man pay the whole of his passage money from Melbourne or South Australia.
4105. By Mr. Nielson: Do you not think it would be a fair thing for the employers to pay the passages of these men, seeing that they paid the passages of the kanakas? Yes.
4106. By Mr. Paget: Would these men come under agreement to work? That is another matter.

4107. When the employers paid the passages of the Polynesians, the Polynesians came under agreement? *J. Larcombe.*
I should think it would be likely that the white men in some cases would be willing to enter into agreements for a certain time.

14 April 1903.

4108. *By the Chairman:* Suppose, for the sake of argument, that all your resources failed in that direction, would you be in favour of immigration? Yes, under certain conditions.

4109. What are the conditions that you refer to? In connection with that matter I may mention that, a good many years ago—I think it was in the eighties—Sir S. W. Griffith gave notice of the discontinuance of the kanaka labour. The planters in Mackay at that time held a meeting to devise what wages they would give to indented immigrants—

4110. It does not help us now to know what happened at that time—we want to deal with existing conditions, and people's opinions might alter? I just wanted to point out how necessary it is to insert a provision in the Immigration Restriction Act. You would have to alter the Immigration Restriction Act before you could get indented immigrants.

4111. *By Mr. Nielson:* Why do you want to alter the Act? Because under the present Federal laws you cannot indent labour for Australia.

4112. Yes, you can, if you can satisfy the Minister that there is not sufficient labour in the State? That is only for special labour.

4113. No, it refers to any labour; that is mentioned in the Act passed last December? In any case, so far as getting labour from the old country is concerned, I think it would be much better to get Australians.

4114. *By the Chairman:* But suppose the supply of Australian labour is insufficient? I would inquire into the Australian labour first, and then I would allow other labour to come in under certain conditions.

4115. What would you suggest should be done with regard to the deportation of kanakas? I think it would be better if the Queensland Government chartered vessels and took the arrangements for the deportation into their own hands. It would be done more expeditiously, more humanely, and cheaper if it were left in the Government's own hands.

4116. You know that a Government agent goes with every return ship? Yes; but I believe they are asking £8 per head now.

4117. *By Mr. Nielson:* The fare is £7? I believe it has advanced to £8, and when the time comes for the kanakas to leave, the fare will be increased to £9.

4118. The planters are responsible for the extra money? No; they are only responsible for £5.

4119. No, they are responsible for the lot? I did not know that.

4120. There is no limit to the amount; even if it goes up to £20, the last employer will have to pay? I did not know that.

4121. *By the Chairman:* Can you give us any suggestions with regard to the deportation of the islanders? I would suggest that the kanakas be landed as near as possible to what they call their own "passages"—that is, if they can do so without running any risk of there being a scarcity of food. I also suggest that the Imperial Government be asked to send a war vessel down there to keep the natives in check, and protect the returning islanders until they are able to defend themselves.

4122. *By Mr. Paget:* They would want a good many war vessels to do that? There are plenty of vessels in the Australian squadron which have nothing else to do.

4123. *By the Chairman:* Each islander must be landed at his own "passage," quite irrespective of whether there is anyone there or not, as it would be dangerous to land him anywhere else? I know that, but if the islander wished to land anywhere else that would not apply.

4124. That is the difficulty, as you might not get them to agree to land at one particular "passage"? It is proposed to re-engage some kanakas for a further period of six or twelve months.

4125. Who suggested that? I saw it in the Press. The plea has been that the kanakas cannot be returned within twelve or eighteen months, and that in the meantime it would be better to re-engage them for a further term. I wish to enter a decided protest against anything of that kind being allowed.

4126. How would you propose that the kanakas should be maintained after the 31st December, because there are 6,000 kanakas here, and, in your opinion, they should not be allowed to work—Would you make the kanakas maintain themselves out of their earnings and savings? I think if the Government chartered vessels there would be no difficulty in getting them away. I saw a statement that there were 5,000 kanakas here. Well, the Government would have no difficulty in dealing with that number.

4127. Do you think it would be humane to deport them in such large numbers to the islands, and would there not be a chance of famine there? If the Government have to find them in food here they might find them in food at the islands.

4128. You think the State should provide them with food? The State should see that they do not starve.

4129. You know that the first three months of the year are the hurricane season in the New Hebrides, and ships cannot go there? I know that it is dangerous to go there in certain seasons.

4130. What would you suggest they should do in the three months that they cannot be sent away? They should stay here.

4131. And be supported by the State? Yes. There are hundreds of white men walking about now, and they have to look for work for six months.

4132. We just want your idea? The men should not be allowed to starve.

4133. You think that they should pay to maintain themselves, and when their resources come to an end the State should pay? Yes; they should not be allowed to starve.

4134. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you had any practical experience in the island trade? No.

4135. You have not been on board a labour vessel? No.

4136. And you know nothing of the conditions under which these islanders live in their villages? No. That information could be obtained from the missionaries on the islands.

4137. We have a large amount of evidence from men connected with the islands, and one of the difficulties they think will arise if large numbers of men are returned there at one time will be in connection with the food supply? Yes; but that will be for a time only.

4138. Yes; but while the grass grows, the steel starves? It would be the duty of the State, or the Commonwealth, to see that these men did not starve.

4139. I might point out that it has been suggested to those intimately acquainted with the conditions there that there is grave danger to the people in connection with the food supplies—are you aware of that? I have seen that stated, but I should like to point out that the conditions have changed. The men

- J. Larcombe. who gave that evidence have not been on the islands for years, and it would be better to get the evidence of someone who has been there recently.
1410. *By Mr. Nielson*: (One of the men who gave that evidence had only been back a week from the islands? I saw the evidence of some men who had not been there for some time.
1411. *By the Chairman*: We examined a Government agent who had just come back from the islands, and he told us there would be a great danger? In all parts of the islands?
1413. *By Mr. Nielson*: He also said that if the Queensland Government sent down a large amount of food it would simply lead to a scramble and a fight for it? I suggest that the Imperial Government should send war vessels so that they should not fight.
1414. The island of Malayta is about 100 miles long, and from 20 to 30 miles wide; it is thickly populated and fairly fertile; there are about 3,000 natives of the island in Queensland—a war vessel could not do much there? The mere presence of a war vessel might prevent a disturbance.
1415. *By Mr. Paget*: It a supply of food was landed and given into the charge of a saltwater chief who received back twenty or thirty islanders, it has been said that in all probability the bushmen, hearing of that food, would come down and kill the saltwater men? It is a difficult position. If you re-engage the kanakas, you reopen the whole question of black labour, and I think it is time the question was settled.
1416. *By the Chairman*: On the other hand, if you do not allow them to re-engage you are face to face with the position that you have 6,000 idle men awaiting shipment; where would you have them—hanging round the towns or where? It would be a serious danger.
1417. How would you meet the difficulty? The Queensland Government should have vessels ready, and make arrangements to take them somewhere to one of the islands as soon as possible.
1418. You say that they should all go out in the month of January, and that raises another difficulty—that it would be in the middle of the hurricane season when they got there—If you had steamers you would be fairly safe, but it would be a heavy expense to get a number of steamers, and you would be landing all the men at one time? They would be landed on different islands.
1419. There are something like 3,000 men in Queensland belonging to one island in the Solomons, and we are told that in the Solomons they live from hand to mouth—When their food supplies run short they go short until the next season? It seems to me that the men will have to be provided with food for a time, and it would be much better to send food to the islands than to feed them here. In a short time the men who go back from Queensland will be in a better position to provide food than the people now on the islands.
1450. *By Mr. Nielson*: And they are better able to do that now than before they came to Queensland? Much better, and they would soon be able to defend themselves against the others. If you re-engage the kanakas, you cannot give white labour a fair trial. You want to encourage married men to settle round the plantations, and the young people will grow up accustomed to the work and the place will be their home.
1451. *By the Chairman*: What areas would you suggest they should be settled on? It would all depend upon the quality of the land, but I think 160 acres should be the maximum.
1452. That would be of second-class pastoral land, I suppose—What area would you suggest for agricultural land? About 80 acres. They would not be dependent altogether upon their land. For a time, at all events, they would be helping in the canefields.
1453. *By Mr. Paget*: I take it that you are now speaking in connection with providing labour for the sugar industry? For the time being. It might ultimately lead to something else.
1454. You are not speaking of the subdivision of large estates into small homestead areas?—We are only dealing with the labour question? Yes; where a man with a small piece of land could find work for himself when he was not employed on the plantations. He might settle down, with his family around him, instead of being a nomad; but, while you have the kanakas on the plantations, many white men will not take their families there.
1455. A lot of white men with families are settled on the plantations? Not on the plantations.
1456. Yes; large numbers of them? But, even with your knowledge, you cannot say that there would not be a much larger number of married men of the right class settled there if there were no kanakas.
1457. *By the Chairman*: That is an additional reason why there should be no re-engagement? Yes.
1458. Is there anything else you would like to mention? With regard to what has been said here this morning, I do not think the Labour party or the labour organisation have any wish that the men who are married to white women, and have families, should be dealt with harshly. They should be shown every consideration.
1459. Do you think they should be deported? Not if they wish to stay. Speaking for myself—and I think I am speaking for the organisation in that respect; in fact, I was authorised to do so—they would not wish to see men in that position dealt with harshly.
1460. That is rather vague—Do they wish those men to be allowed to remain in the State? Yes, there are only a few of them.
1461. How would you suggest that pure-blooded kanaka children, born in Queensland, should be dealt with—We are told that an enormous percentage of such children die when they are taken to the islands—Would you advocate some concession to them, too? I should think it best for the Federal authorities to deal with all such cases on their individual merits. I do not think you could lay down a hard-and-fast rule.
1462. Would you allow those children to remain in Queensland? I would not like to say I would be agreeable to let them all stay, but it would all depend upon circumstances. All the families would not be sickly, or liable to take disease.
1463. The testimony is that all children born here are peculiarly susceptible to malaria? It would be better to leave it to the discretion of the officer in charge of the work of deportation to a certain extent.
1464. That is begging the question. I want to get your opinion, but you prefer not to give an opinion? I prefer not to give any decided opinion upon that subject.
1465. *By Mr. Paget*: Is not the question of deporting children who are susceptible to the island fever, and who have been educated in our State schools and in our Sunday schools, one which deserves the serious consideration of your organisation? It requires serious consideration, no doubt, but I am not prepared to give a definite answer. Each case should be decided on its own merits. They cannot all be exactly the same. What might be inhumane in one instance might be no injustice in another. It appears to me that they do not stand in the same position as kanakas who are married to white women.

4166. There are a large number of islanders in Queensland who came here as single men, and who are J. Larcombe. now married to women belonging to women of other islands—when those people have families, how would your organisation propose to deal with them; if either goes to the native island of the other, they are in danger of losing their lives? Would it not be possible to send them to one of the islands that neither belonged to?

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4167. Then, again, the difficulty arises under the bond that the employers signed when the islanders were brought to this State, that the "boy" has to be returned to the "passage" at which he was recruited? That is only if the "boy" insists upon it, but suppose he waives the point, and is willing to go to another place for the sake of his wife, could you not deal with it in that way.

4168. I am speaking of the Polynesian Department and its officers on whom the Government have conferred great responsibilities in seeing that each islander is not landed at a different "passage" to the one at which he was recruited, and these are the difficulties that arise? I think, as I said before, that the only thing to do in matters of that kind is to trust to some extent to the Federal authorities and their humanity and justice in dealing with the matter. There are not a great many of these cases.

4169. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know the kanaka settlement at North Rockhampton? I do not know much about it. I know there are numbers of kanakas there.

4170. Have you seen the settlement? I have been along the road. Some of them hold land.

4171. *By the Chairman*: Do you know under what title they hold that land? I heard there were trustees appointed.

4172. *By Mr. Paget*: In the case of freeholds? Yes.

4173. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is this settlement a menace to the district? I do not think so. I believe at times when they get drunk, which they ought not to get, they are very rowdy, but when they are sober they are very orderly. There are times when they do get drunk, and then there is a disturbance. I am not speaking from experience. It is only hearsay that I am giving.

4174. Has the presence of these kanakas a prejudicial effect on the interests of the white residents? To some extent it must have. Do you mean as regards labour?

4175. Yes? Well they must to some extent enter into competition, but not to any very great extent.

4176. Is there any influence at work to prevent the men from remaining here? No.

4177. You do not think that there are decided influences at work to persuade the "boys" not to go home? No, except the religious influence.

4178. *By Mr. Paget*: And that is supposed to be a good influence? Yes, it is. So far as I am concerned, I have not any intimate knowledge on the subject, but the chief influence so far as I know is that of clergymen and others who think it would be better to keep them here. Mr. Hopkins is one gentleman who takes an interest in the "boys," but I believe he does it entirely from unselfish motives, and he thinks it is not right to deport the "boys." So far as the men who are married to white women are concerned, some think it would be a hardship to deport them, and that it would be entirely unnecessary, because there are very few of them, and they are not likely to do much harm.

4179. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think that the establishment of a systematically-conducted Labour Bureau would be of benefit to the workers? Undoubtedly, I think it would be of great benefit.

4180. Have you any knowledge of the working of what are known as the Departments of Labour in different parts of the world, or in the other States? I have not. I believe there is a Department of Labour in New Zealand, but I have no personal knowledge of it, and only know what I have read. I believe it is working very well, and I certainly believe it would be a very good thing if we had the same thing here. It would be a good thing for both the employer and the men, because the employer could go into the bureau and find out what men are looking for employment, and what sort of employment they wanted. It would be of great assistance to the employer, and it would certainly be of great assistance to the men. I think the men should be assisted, and I believe they are to some extent just now.

4181. *By Mr. Paget*: You mean they are assisted on the railway lines? Yes; but assistance only on the railway lines is not sufficient, as if a man wishes to go up North he cannot go by rail, and he has to pay his passage by steamer.

4182. That is so, and it is a difficulty that has already cropped up? It is no use offering a man work in the North if he cannot get North. If he got a job in the sugar districts in the North, and had to walk there, by the time he arrived all the work would be over.

4183. *By the Chairman*: And if a man walked up there he would want a spell before he started work, because he would really not be physically fit to enable him to start work and earn good wages? That is so.

4184. You think, then, from that point of view that the workers should also get steamer fares? Yes.

4185. *By Mr. Nielson*: To come back to your ideas, you say that the department in charge of the deportation of the kanakas should be allowed to use their discretion? Yes; to a certain extent.

4186. Do you think that the "boys" who do not wish to go away should be allowed to send in a petition setting out the individual circumstances in each case, and that each case should be decided by the Minister in charge of the department? Not unless they have good grounds for petitioning.

4187. Would you not allow them to petition or appeal? Yes; I would allow them to appeal.

4188. And the Minister would decide each individual case? Yes. That would get over the difficulty that Mr. Paget points out.

4189. *By the Chairman*: Do you mean the State Minister? No; the Commonwealth Minister who has the department under his control.

4190. *By Mr. Paget*: Unfortunately, petitions take a long time to decide sometimes, and meanwhile these men are in the position that they are not allowed to work? Of course, objections can be raised to every scheme, and there are defects in every scheme; and the only thing to be done is to adopt that course wherein lies the least evil.

4191. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think that there would be any danger of the kanakas being induced by interested persons to appeal to be allowed to remain here? I certainly think so. That would be the danger if they were allowed to appeal.

4192. Do you mean that each individual case would have to be investigated? That should rest with the officer in charge. If he thought the men wishing to appeal had sufficient grounds to appeal, he might allow them to appeal; but under ordinary circumstances I do not think any appeal should be allowed, as that would delay the proceedings for an indefinite period.

- J. Larcombe. 4193. Do you think that if the *kanakas* are allowed to appeal there should be stated grounds to which the appeal should be confined? I should think so.
- 14 April 1906. 4194. On what grounds would you allow a *kanaka* to appeal? Only in the case mentioned by Mr. Paget about the white women.
4195. Would you consider that to be a fair ground? Yes. If he impresses the officer in charge that way—and this officer should have discretionary power to a certain extent—then he might allow the *kanaka* to appeal to the Minister.
4196. You do not think that would have the effect, for instance, of making *kanakas* want to marry white women all over the country? I do not think so. Whatever the *kanakas* want I do not think the white women will be likely to commit themselves.
4197. By Mr. Paget: That is a condition of things that no one desires to see? No.
4198. By Mr. Nielson: Have you any idea of the number of men unemployed in Rockhampton at the present time? It would be difficult to ascertain that. It would be difficult to give an opinion off-hand, as the men do not register at the Labour Bureau.
4199. By the Chairman: Why? For several reasons. The chief reason why the men will not register is that they have to attend every morning, and as a rule they are a long time before they get any employment. A man might attend morning after morning, and then miss one morning, and another man steps in and gets the work that was intended for the first man, and the first man loses his chance.
4200. By Mr. Nielson: Are the men you speak of local residents? Chiefly local residents.
4201. Are there many comers and goers, as I might term them, that come to Rockhampton? There are a few, but, as a rule, they do not come to the Labour Bureau very much.
4202. Where do they generally go? They do not go to look for work. They travel about from place to place. They go to the diggings. They do not go to the Labour Bureau at all. The shearers looking for work might go to the Pastoralists' Association.
4203. By Mr. Paget: This is not a town or district that attracts the mill labourer? No.
4204. It is not like the sugar district, which attracts mill labourers? No.
4205. Do you think it a hardship for men to have to go to the Labour Bureau every morning? I do not think it is a hardship. But some people do not care about it. I think though that if a man attends the Labour Bureau frequently and gets nothing, and then some work is available on the following morning, and he is not there, he should be notified of it.
4206. By the Chairman: Does the officer in charge take the addresses of men applying for work? It would be an easy matter to take their addresses as he takes all their names.
4207. By Mr. Paget: But suppose a man gives as his address the "Town Common," which might be 8,000 or 10,000 acres in extent, it would be difficult for the officer to find him? It would be difficult in that case, and that would be an instance where it would not be expected.
4208. Then you speak of the town? Yes; where a man can easily be found, and if he does not attend within a reasonable time after he has been notified, then the officer should be able to deal with the matter. The Labour Bureau is not availed of as much as it might be and I think that is one of the reasons.
4209. By the Chairman: Have you anything more you wish to say? No. I wish to thank you on behalf of the Worker's Political Organisation for the way you have received their representative this morning.

ALFRED ASHFORD, Cordial Maker, examined:

- A. Ashford. 4210. By the Chairman: In what capacity do you appear here? I am here as a member of the Workers' Political Organisation.
- 14 April 1906. 4211. You and Mr. Larcombe have been delegated to appear here? Yes.
4212. You have heard the views expressed by Mr. Larcombe as regards the *kanaka* question generally, the Polynesian Act, and the question of deportation; do you agree with the views as expressed in his evidence? The views he expressed are pretty well my own sentiments, except in the case which Mr. Paget mentioned, where a Pacific Islander marries a woman belonging to another island. I should not object to these people not being deported, if they wished to stay, but if it was decided that they should be deported, then I think it would be a good thing to send them to some island off the coast.
4213. By Mr. Paget: Do you mean an island off this coast? No, I mean one island in the New Hebrides, or some other suitable place.
4214. By the Chairman: You think there should be an island reserved to put these people on? Yes; that is, if they wish to go.
4215. But suppose they do not wish to go? If they do not wish to go, seeing that they have native-born children, I do not see how you can very well deport the father and mother and keep the children here, and you cannot possibly deport the children.
4216. Do you mean that, as the children were native born, you would have to keep the parents here to look after them? Yes.
4217. Does that cover the whole of the points in regard to which you disagree with Mr. Larcombe? Yes; but I wish to speak in connection with the difficulty of providing labour for the cane-fields.
4218. By Mr. Paget: At the end of the current year there are 5,000 or 6,000 labourers in the cane-fields who will not be available—How is that deficiency to be supplied? My experience of the Northern cane-fields is that, under fair conditions, the planters will be able to capture the cream of the labour from the whole of the States. The cane season does not last all the year round, and for seven months in the year work is slack; but I have no doubt that men will leave shearing to go to the sugar districts. If it can be managed so that men will be able to secure small areas of land, there will be no difficulty in settling them in the cane growing districts. Fifteen acres of good land should keep a man fully employed in the off season. If it is poor ground, a little more would be required.
4219. By the Chairman: What maximum area would you suggest? I should say 20 acres, especially if the man has to work in the harvesting of the cane. I merely mention this to suggest how the surplus labour may be kept in the district.
4220. By Mr. Paget: In the Mackay district two reserves are being cut up for the purpose of forming workers' homesteads, and there is an organisation formed in connection with the matter? I was not aware of that. The district to which you belong is pretty good scrub country which does not require much labour in ploughing and harrowing, whilst forest land requires a great deal more work. It would not take such a large area of scrub land to make a living on as forest land.

A. Ashford.

11A, ril. 1906.

4221. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you ever worked in the canefields? Yes. I worked for Mr. Paget twenty years ago.
4222. Have you had any recent experience? Not for twelve years.
4223. We were told in the Bundaberg, Isis, and Gin Gin districts that the wages averaged from £1 a week and found in the slack season to 27s. 6d. a week and keep in the harvesting season—Do you think those rates of remuneration are sufficient to induce men to go into the sugar districts? I do not. For harvesting cane I believe in the co-operative form of contract.
4224. What ought a man to earn? I can only go by my past experience. On the Herbert River twelve years ago we averaged £7 a month for cutting and loading cane at 3s. 6d. a ton.
4225. *By Mr. Paget*: Did you find yourselves? No; we were found in the ordinary scale of rations, and had to find our own cook. The crop on Macnade plantation is exceptionally heavy on account of the good soil.
4226. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many tons were you cutting to the acre? There were fourth ratoons that went 20 tons the acre. Some second ratoons went as high as 60 tons, and one lot as high as 80 tons, but I did not get into that paddock.
4227. *By the Chairman*: What do you think a man ought to earn in the slack seasons and in the harvesting season? Under the suggestions which I offer, a man might average 30s. a week in the busy season. But it is not a question of what a man ought to earn, but of what will keep him and his wife and family if they are settled down there. No man expects more than a living wage.
4228. What would be a living wage for a married man? Nothing less than £2 a week.
4229. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you speaking of the crushing season? Yes.
4230. *By the Chairman*: And what wages should a single man get? I only know what was the ruling rate of wages when I was working on the plantations. There was no white labour in the fields at that time, but the wages then paid in the mill were 25s. a week.
4231. *By Mr. Paget*: They are about the same now? Those were fair wages eight years ago.
4232. What is your idea about wages during the off season? I should say 22s. 6d. a week and found.
4233. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think that rate should induce men to go into the sugar districts? Yes, considering they are working for less at the present time.
4234. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you think it necessary that the bonus should be continued so as to allow of a white man being paid the wages it is proposed to pay in the canefields? I believe it should be continued until the farmers get over the difficulty of growing cane without being hard pressed.
4235. You understand that the bonus is a measure of protection to enable people in New South Wales and Queensland to grow cane sugar with white labour only? Yes.
4236. Well, it has been suggested to us that it might be of advantage if a system of discharge certificates were initiated amongst the labourers of the sugar industry just the same as there is amongst the labourers connected with the pastoral industry—What is your opinion of that? I do not think they are of much use. I was for many years working in the sugar-cane fields, and I could always take my place and do my work without any discharge. If my labour was satisfactory I needed no discharge. It is the same with all labourers. They will go to the places where they get the fairest and best conditions.
4237. *By the Chairman*: Good man as you are—and I am sure you are a good man—do you not think you would find a difficulty in getting on in places where nobody knows anything about you? I have met cases where a man was asked where was his reference. I would say that I have not got any reference, and if my labour did not suit, then my employer would know what to do.
4238. Then you do not approve of the reference system? No.
4239. *By Mr. Paget*: It is a suggestion that has been made to us since we have been on this Commission? Yes.
4240. *By the Chairman*: What is the furthest place North that you ever worked? I worked at Macnade Plantation, on the Herbert River?
4241. In what month? In July.
4242. And how late in the summer did you work? We all finished just before Christmas.
4243. *By Mr. Paget*: Were you cane-cutting? Yes.
4244. Right up till Christmas? Yes.
4245. Were there many in your party? Sixteen.
4246. *By the Chairman*: Did you go back for a second year? No; I left that district after the first year.
4247. Did you ever do any navvying work, or earthwork, or tanksinking? Yes.
4248. Where? I did navvying work when I first came to Rockhampton.
4249. Can you compare navvying work and cane-cutting? There is no comparison between the work in the canefields and navvying.
4250. Which is the harder? I would rather do cane-cutting than navvying.
4251. As regards the arduous character of the labour? Yes. I might point out that we always have hotter weather after Christmas than we have before Christmas, and when the cane-cutting season starts it is rather cold.
4252. You get into condition before the summer arrives? Yes, we get into condition before the warm weather really comes on.
4253. *By Mr. Nielson*: As to the exertion required, is cane-cutting easier than navvying? Yes, it is not so laborious. You need to be smart and quick at cane-cutting, but there is not that heavy drag on you that you get from navvying work and lifting balls and muck.
4254. *By Mr. Paget*: In speaking of cane-cutting, you speak of loading as well? Yes.
4255. We all know that loading is much heavier work than cutting? Yes, that is right.
4256. Is there anything more you wish to add? No, nothing more, as I agree with Mr. Larcombe.

PETER WIENE, a Native of Lifu, examined:

P. Wiene.

14 April, 1906.

4257. *By the Chairman*: How long have you been here? Fourteen years.
4258. How did you come to Australia? I came by the steamer "Hero."
4259. Were you a sailor or a passenger? I was quarter-master on the steamer.
4260. What made you stop here? I had to stop in Queensland.
4261. What have you been working at since you came here? The first work I did was for a doctor in Sydney.

- P. Wicen. 4262. When did you first come to Queensland? I signed on on a pearling ship to go to Torres Straits.
 4263. How long did you stop up there? I was seven years in New Guinea and Thursday Island
 14 April, 1906. engaged in pearling.
4264. What did you do then? I came to Mackay.
 4265. What did you work at there? I took a contract to cut sugar-cane.
 4266. What price did you get? I got 4s. 6d. per ton to cut and load.
 4267. Did you employ kanakas? Yes; I employed some "ticket boys."
 4268. Did you make money at that? I made enough for me.
 4269. What have you been doing since? I came down here to Rockhampton.
 4270. How long ago? I have been here for five years.
 4271. Do you live in Queen's Park? No; I live with my uncle in Eddington street, on the Yaamba road.
 4272. Do you work? Yes; I cut wood.
 4273. You have been asked by the Polynesians over there to come here and give evidence? Yes.
 4274. You had a meeting over there? Yes.
 4275. Tell us what they told you to say, and what they agreed that you should tell us? Two weeks ago they had a meeting, and they asked me to come and speak for them to the Commission. That is the reason I am here to-day.
 4276. What do you want to say—Do all the "boys" want to go home? I asked these "boys," "What you want to do if Federal Parliament say you can go home or stop?" and they all say, "We wish to stop in Queensland."
 4277. Did they all say that? Yes, they all say that.
 4278. Some of them have land at North Rockhampton? Yes, some of them own land.
 4279. How did they get that land—Is it held by trustees? No; they buy it from white people.
 4280. Where is the land—Is it in the scrub? No, it is in Forde street.
 4281. Have any of them got farms and gardens? Yes.
 4282. Where are the farms and gardens? At the same place.
 4283. Did they buy the land? Yes. They asked the white people to rent it.
 4284. By Mr. Paget: They pay rent for it? Yes.
 4285. By the Chairman: Plenty of children? Yes.
 4286. And none of them want to go home? None of them.
 4287. Do you know if there are any "boys" down at Coorooman Creek? I know some of them.
 4288. Do they want to go home? Some of them have sent word to their friends to say that they do not want to go home. The "boys" also told me to tell you that they have all been here so long that they do not want to go home. They came here from the islands when they were young, and they became civilised, and were baptised as British subjects. They signed a three years' agreement, and they like this State. They do not want to leave this State. There is no money in their islands, and no clothes, but in Queensland they have money and clothes, and they are all Christian people. That is why they do not want to leave this country. They wish to stop here because they like Queensland. They said to me: "Peter, our grandfather and grandmother die, and we don't want to go home."
 4289. How do you expect them to be received? They also said to me: "If they force us to go home, how are we going to live? We have been here so long, and they will never send us back." They also say: "If they drive us out of this country we can do nothing; and we must leave it to Parliament. If Parliament says 'go,' we go; and if Parliament says 'stop,' we stop."
 4290. By the Chairman: You are prepared to bow to the law? Yes.
 4291. Is there anything more you wish to say? Yes; I would like to say something about myself. I am here before you and I think it is right for you to hear me. Please, sir, I did not come here under the Polynesian Act, because I come from New Caledonia, and I am a French subject myself. I am here with British subjects, and I do not want to go to the Pacific Islands.
 4292. You claim protection as a French subject on British soil? Yes. I saw in the paper some time ago that all coloured labour will have to clear out of Queensland, and of course I want to tell you the truth, and that is that I do not belong to the same islands that these other "boys" come from. We all come from the Pacific, but I am a French subject myself, and if you want to send us away I want the signature of the French Consul so that I can be sent away on a French steamer from this colony. I throw myself on the protection of the French Consul to prevent me from being sent back with these islanders.
 4293. I understand you claim the protection of the French Consul? Yes; I claim the protection of the French Consul, and I ask you to send my certificate to him.
 4294. I believe there are several Lifu men here? Yes.
 4295. Is there anything else you have to say? There is no use saying anything more. I have told my story.

ALFRED MALEZIEUX, native of New Caledonia, examined:

- A. Malezieux. 4296. By the Chairman: To what island do you belong? I am a native of New Caledonia.
 4297. Then you are a French subject? Yes.
 14 April, 1906. 4298. Where are you living now? Elphinstone lane, North Rockhampton.
 4299. What is your occupation? I am a gardener.
 4300. Do you grow vegetables? Yes.
 4301. Do you say you ought not to be sent away because you are a French subject? Yes. I claim the right to stop here. If the law does not allow me to stop, I will have to apply to the French Consul for protection.
 4302. Is there anything more you want to say? I want to point out that the law in France is that all children, no matter what is the nationality of their parents, are French subjects. In the same way, all children born here are British subjects, and they have no right to send them away to the islands.
 4303. By Mr. Nielson: How did you come to Queensland? I came in a labour vessel.
 4304. Where from? From Sandwich.
 4305. Did you come to work in the canefields? Yes.
 4306. Did you sign an agreement? Yes.
 4307. Were you able to read and write when you signed that agreement? Yes.
 4308. By the Chairman: Can you read French? Yes.

4309. *By Mr. Nielson*: And English too? Yes.

4310. Did the Government agent explain it all to you that you were coming to Queensland for three years? Yes.

4311. And when your three years were up you were to go back again? No; he said when my three years were up if I wanted to stop in Queensland I could do so, but if I wished to go back to the islands I could please myself. He told me if I wanted to stay that the Government would allow me to stay. He told me that I could not be recruited as a native of New Caledonia, so he put me on as a Sandwich man, where he took me.

4312. You signed as a Sandwich man? Yes, and I was told that when I finished my three years I could stop here as a New Caledonian.

4313. You are aware that £5 was paid to the Government here to take you back home? Yes.

4314. Did the Government agent tell you that the money would be here to pay for your return passage to Sandwich any time you liked? Yes.

4315. How are you going to prove that you are a French subject? I was working on board ship, and I can prove it by telling you the names of the places.

4316. You signed to the effect that you belonged to Sandwich? Yes, because I wanted to come to Queensland, and they would not pass me if I came as a New Caledonian born man.

4317. What year did you come here? In 1859 or 1890.

4318. What ship? The "Para."

4319. Who was the agent? De Vaux.

4320. Were you born in New Caledonia? Yes; in Noumea.

4321. Do they register births in Noumea? Yes.

4322. Could you get a certificate of your birth if you wrote for it? I have lived here for twenty years now, and I do not know whom to write to.

4323. In what year were you born? In 1870.

4324. What day and what month? 2nd of May.

4325. *By the Chairman*: Your father's name was Malezieux? Yes; he was an officer in the French army.

4326. Have you anything more to say? Yes; what about my children?

4327. Have you any children? Yes; I have got three step-daughters.

4328. Whom are you married to? I married a New Hebrides woman, and she died last December.

4329. How many children have you? I have none of my own, but there are three step-children that I have to look after.

4330. Where were they born? In Rockhampton.

4331. Who was the father of the children? Dick Bosso, an Aoba man.

4332. How old are these girls? Nineteen, seventeen, and fourteen.

4333. Are they educated? Yes. The youngest still goes to the State school, the next one keeps house, and the eldest goes to work like myself.

4334. Is there anything more you wish to say? Yes. I would like to tell you that a Pacific Islander always gets sick when he goes back to his island. Even if a Malayta "boy" went to Ambrym, and went back to Malaya, he would get the island fever again; and it is worse for those who come from Queensland. The children all die of sickness if they are sent back to the islands from Queensland.

4335. Is there anything more? Yes. Since we have been in Rockhampton the islanders have all borne a good character, and never commit any crime, or interfere with a white woman. The little girls are not afraid to walk along the Yamba road day or night, and they never want the protection of the police so long as the South Sea Islanders are there. That is all I wish to say.

ALBERT PHILIPS, Inspector of Pacific Islanders, examined:

4336. *By the Chairman*: How long have you held the position of Inspector of Pacific Islanders at Rockhampton? Since the 22nd of July last.

4337. Where were you before that? I was Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders at Mackay.

4338. You have been brought into close contact with the Pacific Islanders? Yes.

4339. You are preparing a return which the Commission wish to obtain, giving all particulars with respect to these islanders? Yes.

4340. And you will let us have it at some future time? Yes.

4341. Is there anything on the subject of the Pacific Islanders that you wish to say to us? Well, as inspector for the Rockhampton district, and having consideration for the wishes of the islanders here, I think that certificates of citizenship could be issued to them and the passage money at present held by the Government for them might be divided—one-half to be refunded to the employer upon the issue of this certificate, and the other half used in connection with the expenses of the issue.

4342. You would issue that certificate of citizenship to a Pacific Islander who had been how long in the State—You would not give it to one who had been here only three years? No. I would give it to all who had been in the State prior to the passing of the federal Act.

4343. But that would override the federal Act altogether? I wish it to apply to the islanders here.

4344. You think that all these islanders living respectable lives here should be included—the exemption should apply to them? Yes.

4345. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you think it should also apply to the islanders who have been five years in the State? The option might be given to them to go home if they wished to do so, but if they did not wish to go home they could apply for this certificate.

4346. You are officer in charge of the Labour Bureau? Yes.

4347. Do many labourers avail themselves of the opportunity to register? Yes.

4348. Do many employers avail themselves of the opportunity to secure labour through your bureau? Not a great number.

4349. Have you any statistics to show us how it has been working for the last twelve or eighteen months? Last year the demand for labour totalled 194.

4350. That was in 1905? Yes. The supply was 590 in the same year.

4351. Do those 590 include some who might have registered twice in the same year? Yes.

A. Malezieux.

14 April, 1906.

A. Phillips.

14 April, 1906.

- A. Philips. 4352. Would their names be included as showing that they applied more than once? It would not appear twice in the one month.
- 14 April, 1906. 4353. So men may register three or four times in the one year? Yes.
4354. *By the Chairman*: Then it may be in excess of the real number? Yes. This year, up to date, 118 have been registered.
4355. How many have you been able to secure employment for? Ten.
4356. Is any relief issued here to travellers? Yes.
4357. Who issues it? I do.
4358. When a man applies for relief, does he register his name as in search of work? Yes.
4359. Many who apply for relief simply do so to enable them to go into the country to look for work? They get it to enable them to travel to another town.
4360. Do you think the relief should be left in your hands, or should it be placed under the police? The police report on applicants, and give me every assistance. That applies to married men. Single men I deal with according to circumstances.
4361. *By Mr. Paget*: You are referring to local residents? Yes.
4362. *By the Chairman*: You are not referring to the swagman? No. He gets rations to enable him to travel on.
4363. Is it not preferable that the issue of relief should be in the hands of the officer in charge of the Labour Bureau? The police know more of the applicants than I do.
4364. How can the bureau know what floating labour there is unless the men who are looking for work register with the bureau? I only return the applicants for employment to me.
4365. You do not return every man who applies for relief? No.
4366. *By Mr. Paget*: Is not a man necessarily an applicant for work if he applies for relief? No; he is an applicant for relief to go away. Probably the week before he applies for relief to go away, he registers as an applicant for employment. While he remains here he gets no relief rations.
4367. In the event of a man coming into the town and wishing to go straight on, would you enter him for relief and for employment, knowing that he would use the relief to go to where there might be work? No. I enter his name for relief only, and not for employment.
4368. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you a dépôt here? Yes.
4369. Do men avail themselves of the dépôt to camp in? There is no provision for them doing so.
4370. *By the Chairman*: Would they be allowed to use it? I think not.
4371. Would it not be convenient sometimes for the men to camp there for a limited time, so that, if employers came to you for labour, you would know where to lay your hands on it at once? Then a caretaker and a cook would be required.
4372. Not necessarily a cook? If a man applies for shelter, he is usually sent to the local benevolent asylum.
4373. What use is made of the immigration dépôt? It is not used at present.
4374. Can you suggest anything to make the bureau more useful? No. The bureau is open to both the applicant for labour and to the employer.
4375. *By Mr. Nielson*: How often do you send returns to Brisbane? Every month.
4376. *By the Chairman*: Where is your office? Upstairs here.
4377. Is there a board outside to indicate where the office is? No.
4378. Then a stranger might have difficulty in finding the place. Should there not be some means of directing strangers to you? That is so. The Labour Bureau was up at the residence at one time, and occasionally an applicant goes there, and he is then directed to my office.
4379. Would it not be an improvement if a notice-board were put up outside saying that your office is here? Yes.
4380. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know anything about the state of the labour market outside Rockhampton? Not unless application is made to me. Then I ascertain by wire if necessary.
4381. Otherwise, if a man comes looking for work, you cannot tell him in what districts work is plentiful? No.
4382. *By Mr. Paget*: I suppose you are more in touch with the conditions obtaining in the South than in the sugar districts? Yes.
4383. Are you not inspector of orphanages here? Yes.
4384. There are one or two orphanages in the district? There is one at Meteor Park, and there is one on the Range.
4385. Have you any demand for the children as they grow up? A very good demand.
4386. Where are the greater number of the orphans sent to as apprentices? Mackay takes the largest number at present.
4387. Are they employed by farmers or by townspeople? Chiefly by farmers.
4388. Are you satisfied that they receive fair treatment? Yes. They have very good homes.
4389. Do you think that it is a good thing that they should be employed by farmers and made settlers on the land? Yes; and the children are well satisfied. There is no complaint from them or from their employers. They seem to like the variety of employment that they get in the farming districts.
4390. It is better than allowing them to live about town? Much better.

(North Rockhampton.)

SATURDAY, 14 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

EDWARD HECTOR MCKAY, examined:

4391. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A turner.
 4392. Have you had much to do with the Pacific Islanders at the Sand Hills? Yes.
 4393. How many are there? About forty.
 4394. Do you hold meetings there? Yes.
 4395. How many attend your meetings? All the men, women, and children.
 4396. What do they do? They either lease land or buy it from people down there.
 4397. What are they growing? Sweet potatoes, pineapples, and papaw apples.
 4398. Have they built cottages? Yes.
 4399. Have they behaved themselves well? Yes. I have been at Yepoon and here at all times during the week, and I have always found them quiet and orderly.
 4400. *By Mr. Paget*: They are not given to too much drink? No. There are exceptions, of course.
 4401. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you any idea of the nature of the agreements they have with the owners of the land, and what rent they pay? The name of someone else is inserted in the agreement as trustee

E. H. McKay.

14 April, 1906.

BILLY WOOLTAM, Pacific Islander, examined:

4402. *By Mr. Nielson*: Most of you "boys" own a piece of land? Yes.
 4403. You buy it? Yes.
 4404. Do some rent theirs? Sometimes they rent it, but they do not stop long on rented land.
 4405. Does anyone here pay rent? I could not say.

Billy
Wooltam.

14 April, 1906.

ALFRED MALEZIEUX, Pacific Islander, further examined:

4406. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are you paying rent? Yes.
 4407. Whom do you pay it to? To Mr. Schuffenhauer, through Mr. Ricketts, for this piece of land.
 4408. What rent do you pay? If it is a good season we pay £1 every six months. I did not pay him for a long time, as there was nothing growing.
 4409. You have no written agreement? No.
 4410. Where do you live? In another place.
 4411. Is it your own house? It belongs to my stepdaughter.
 4412. Is there anything else you want to say? Being in Rockhampton so long, we are different now to the Polynesians on the islands; and, if we are forced to go home, we will find it very difficult to live there.
 4413. But do you not think a lot of the men might find it difficult to live here after this year? Yes; if they cannot get work.
 4414. You know that next year they will not get work—you cannot live on nothing—Do all the "boys" understand that they cannot get work after this year? Yes.
 4415. What do you think should be done with you? We might be put in one big settlement. All here will go on the land if they can get it.

A. Malezieux.

14 April, 1906.

PETER ARROO, Pacific Islander, examined:

4416. *By Mr. Nielson*: What island do you belong to? Aoba.
 4417. How many years have you been in Queensland? About twenty years.
 4418. Do you go out to work on the plantations? Yes.
 4419. Are you married? No.
 4420. Have you got a house, and work here? No.
 4421. Have you got a farm? Yes.
 4422. How many acres? Twenty.
 4423. Whom do you rent your land from? Ted Meiland.
 4424. What do you grow? Bananas.
 4425. What rent do you pay? 5s. a week for this year.
 4426. How many years have you been there? Over one year.
 4427. Did you plant the bananas? Yes.
 4428. Did you pay any rent the first year? £5.
 4429. What have you to pay the second year? 5s. a week.
 4430. What will you have to pay next year? I do not know.
 4431. Have you got an agreement? Yes.
 4432. Where is it? Mr. Byfield has it.
 4433. Where is it? Forty miles away.
 4434. Will you bring it and show it to Mr. Philips next week? Yes.
 4435. Does any other "boy" pay rent to Mr. Byfield in the same way? No.
 4436. How many years have you got an agreement for? Two years.
 4437. Have you only planted bananas? Yes.
 4438. You get a crop the second year? Yes.
 4439. Your agreement will finish before you get another crop? I get a fresh agreement then.
 4440. But suppose Mr. Byfield does not want another agreement? He make fresh arrangement.

P. Arroo.

14 April, 1906.

JIMMY PENTECOST, Pacific Islander, examined :

- Jimmy Pentecost.
14 April, 1906.
4441. *By Mr. Nielson*: You come from Pentecost? Yes.
 4442. How many years have you been in Queensland? Eighteen years.
 4443. Have you got a ticket? No.
 4444. How did you come here? I come out longa Maryborough to work on sugar plantation.
 4445. Are you married? No.
 4446. How long have you been in Rockhampton? About eleven years.
 4447. Do you want work? I have a little piece of land at Nankin Junction.
 4448. Did you buy it? Yes.
 4449. Who looks after that land for you? Mr. John McGrath.
 4450. Is he trustee for you? Yes.
 4451. What do you grow? Corn, pumpkins, and potatoes. I make a living.
 4452. Do you want to go home at the end of this year? No. I like to go home—I like stop all the same.
 4453. Which do you want to do? If the Government say me go home, me go home. Suppose Government say no go, me stop.

WAYTOUR, Pacific Islander, examined :

- Waytour.
14 April, 1906.
4454. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are you a "ticket" boy? No.
 4455. How long have you been in Queensland? Twenty-eight years. I worked for Mr. Pattison, the butcher.
 4456. Are you married? Yes; to a woman belonging to same island as myself.
 4457. How many children have you got? Three.
 4458. Do they go to school? Yes.
 4459. Have you got land? Yes, and a house.
 4460. You buy it? Yes.
 4461. What name on paper longa land? Mr. Foley and Mr. Julius. It is in my son Philip's name.

GOLIERN NARTO, Wife of Alick Ling, otherwise Willingil, Pacific Islander, examined :

- G. Narto.
14 April, 1906.
4462. Are you married? Yes; I Alick Ling's wife.
 4463. Where does he come from? Lacon.
 4464. What island you come from? Aoba.
 4465. Your husband got ticket? No.
 4466. How many years has he been in Queensland? I cannot tell you—a long time.
 4467. He go work sugar? No; ship steal him when he little chap.
 4468. He got land? Yes; this place here.
 4469. Little fellow garden? Yes.
 4470. He been buy him? Name on paper, Mr. Foley, Mr. Julius.
 4471. How many children you got? One.
 4472. How old? Ten years old.
 4473. He go to school? Yes.
 4474. Have you been married longa church? No; me been stop longa him.
 4475. How long have you been here? Twenty-seven years.
 4476. Have you a ticket? No.
 4477. Why did you not get a ticket? We not want ticket, and master say we not want it. He did no care about it.
 4478. Would you like to stop in Queensland? Yes.
 4479. You no want to go longa island? If we go home, we belong to nobody.
 4480. Father and mother dead? Yes.
 4481. Sister? Yes.
 4482. Brother too? Yes. All old people dead.
 4483. Who told you this? Plenty "boy" longa my island.
 4484. Man belong to you want to stop Queensland, too? Yes; he always sick.
 4485. He old man? No, young fella; he got asthma.

ANDREW TOYSIN, examined :

- A. Toysin.
14 April, 1906.
4486. *By Mr. Nielson*: What island do you come from? Motlap.
 4487. How long have you been in Queensland? Twenty-one years.
 4488. Then you are not a "ticket boy"? No.
 4489. You came to work on the plantations? Yes.
 4490. Are you married? Yes.
 4491. Whom are you married to? A Motlap woman.
 4492. How long has she been here? Three years.
 4493. Where were you married? Longa English Church.
 4494. Your missus here? No.
 4495. Does she want to go home? No. She want to stop with me.
 4496. Do you want to go home? No. No man can make me go.
 4497. Have you been talking to other "boys" from Motlap? Yes.
 4498. Your father and mother alive? No; both dead.
 4499. Any brother or sister? One stop at home.
 4500. You want to stop longa Queensland? Yes. Any time I like to go I go.
 4501. Supposing there is no ship, how can you go home? Then I stop all time.
 4502. Have you got a bit of land? No.
 4503. Where do you work? Nowhere; I get a job sometimes, you know.
 4504. *By Mr. Paget*: What work do you do? Me no work now.
 4505. Where you work last time? In Mackay.

4506. How long ago? About a couple of year ago.

4507. What did you do then? I work at Mackay, then I come here, then I go back to Mackay. I go to Mackay two or three times.

4508. You go up there to cut cane? Yes.

4509. Can you get work in this district? Sometimes.

4510. Are you stopping with friends now? With my countrymen.

A. Toywin.

14 April, 1906.

JOHN EWED, Pacific Islander, examined:

4511. *By Mr. Nielson*: What island do you belong to? Lifu.

4512. Are you a married man? Yes.

4513. You married to white woman? Yes.

4514. Is your wife here? No; she has gone into town to decorate the church for Easter Sunday.

4515. You are a French subject? Yes. Supposing we got no certificate, we free men—Can we work for one another if we like?

J. Ewed.

14 April, 1906.

Mr. Phillips will explain that to you. There is nothing to prevent you working masters.

PETER WIEEN, Pacific Islander, further examined:

4516. *By Mr. Nielson*: What do all these "boys" intend to do, seeing they cannot work next year? I ask them at the first meeting whether they would like to starve or to go home, and they said they would rather starve than go home.

P. Wicen.
14 April, 1906.

4517. Are there many New Hebrides "boys" here? There are none but Hebrides "boys" here.

4518. There are missionaries in every place in the New Hebrides? Yes.

4519. Do you not think that, if the "boys" went home, they could live there? If you let them go one by one when they are willi up to go, all right; but, if we are forced to go, those who have been here a long time have got used to Queensland food—meat, bread, rice, and everything here—altogether different food to the food in the South Sea Islands, and when they go to the islands they are all right to-day, but to-morrow they get sick.

4520. *By the Chairman*: Do you think that you might get sick and die because of the different food? We all die by and by, but still you like to take care of yourself.

4521. *By Mr. Nielson*: You think "boys" are better off here, and that is why you like to stop? Yes. When I ask these "boys" they say, "Let the law do what it like—drive me away or shoot me down, just the same; but I rather stop in Queensland." We are very sorry, and we have plenty feeling. We know white people don't like black men in this country, and hate the sight of us; but, if you invite your friend to tea in the evening, would you like to hunt him back after tea? These "boys" just like that. I am a Loyalty Islander. I know God, and I know his love and peace. These "boys" no come from their islands by their own will. Ship come to their islands and make fool of them, and fetch them to this country, and now when they open their eye, and know God, and get civilised, and read the Bible, and every three months they go to Holy Communion, I am ashamed to think you drive away people like that. That is a thing I would not do.

4522. Most of these "boys" are different to a lot of the "boys" who came to Queensland a couple or three years ago—newchum "boys"? There is only one newchum "boy" here.

4523. What about the newchum "boys" who came to the plantations a couple of years ago? I am not talking about them. We are only talking about ourselves, and we are very glad to see you here to-day.

4524. Do you think it very hard to send newchum "boys" home, too? Those men can go easy, because they only come lately. We are very glad for thie new law to send back newchums. We agree with that, but we have been here so long that we do not like to leave Rockhampton.

4525. You think that the "boys" who have been here for eighteen or twenty years and have got married ought to be allowed to stop here, the same as the "ticket boys"? Yes. All these boys wish to have a new law made to give us tickets.

4526. Twenty-year "boys"? Yes.

4527. What about the "boy" who has been here eighteen years? I don't know, sir. If we cannot get work, the only thing "boys" wish is to get certificate.

4528. What is the good of a certificate? Then we can go anywhere we like.

4529. You can go anywhere you like now if you pay the passage? I mean we can do any work we like. These "boys" who have no agreement cannot work anywhere. If you give them a certificate, they might travel 1,000 miles—right away to Western Australia.

4530. Parliament made a law which says that, after this year, you cannot get work—all the "boys," except the "ticket boys," are to be sent home—supposing other "boys" who have married white women or island women and have babies born here want to stop in Queensland, how are they going to live? I suppose they go to Government by and by and ask Government for a piece of land. If Government says "all right," then "boys" can take a bit of land and make farms for themselves. If Government say they pay rent, we do that.

4531. You want all "boys" make setlement on a big piece of ground? Yes.

4532. *By the Chairman*: Suppose land longa bush, not close to Rockhampton, you have to go where Government got land? Yes.

4533. "Boy" clear land? Yes.

4534. Fence land? Yes.

4535. Government give him food for a time? Yes; Government give him a start, or so many years without paying rent.

4536. You think "boys" would like that? Yes. If they agree to that, I go and see Government.

(Mackay.)

TUESDAY, 17 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.
MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

WILLIAM BEGG FORDYCE, Cane Farmer, examined:

- W.B. Fordyce.
17 April, 1906.
4537. *By the Chairman*: Where do you reside? Richmond.
4538. How far is that from here? Five and a-half miles. It is on the north side of the Pioneer River.
4539. And you appear here as one of the representatives of the Sugar Farmers' Association? Yes.
4540. What is the area of your farm? Well, I am cultivating about 30 acres.
4541. And how much are you holding? I am holding and looking after about 1,000 acres. I use it for grazing on a general purpose.
4542. How much of it is your own property—you are cultivating 30 acres? Yes.
4543. How much of that is cane? 15 acres.
4544. How many acres of cane did you cut last year? About 15 acres.
4545. What tonnage of cane did you get? Something over 200 tons.
4546. How did you cut it, by day labour or contract? By weekly wage.
4547. By white or coloured labour? White labour.
4548. What rate of wages did you pay? I paid 30s. a week and found.
4549. Was it local labour or floating labour—Were they strangers? No; they were not strangers. They were natives of the district, and men that I knew.
4550. Of course they gave you satisfaction? Yes.
4551. Well, can you say what, in your opinion, is a fair price to give them for a weekly wage? At the present price of cane, I think, if you get reliable men, 30s. a week and found would be a fair wage. That is, provided you get reliable men.
4552. What should the crop average to produce that wage? It should go at least 20 tons to the acre.
4553. *By Mr. Paget*: You would require a crop going 20 tons to the acre to enable you to pay such wages? Yes.
4554. *By the Chairman*: Have you had any experience of cutting cane by contract? I have not.
4555. What price are you getting for cane? 15s. per ton, with a bonus of 4s. 8d. per ton for white-grown cane.
4556. Is that for cane of a certain density, or is that the price paid for any cane? That is the general price paid.
4557. Irrespective of density? Yes.
4558. *By Mr. Nielson*: Delivered at the mills? Yes.
4559. *By Mr. Paget*: You have no opportunity of delivering on to a tramline or the railway? No.
4560. *By the Chairman*: What distance have you to draw it? Between 8 and 9 miles.
4561. The figures you have given us show that you can grow cane and draw it 8 or 9 miles at the price you get? Yes, I can do it at that; but I do a good deal of the labour myself. I could not make it pay by having to cart that distance if I had to buy new horses and teams and pay wages. I would not do it for that price then. I had the horses and wagons, and the mill alongside me closed down, and I had to cart the cane this extra distance.
4562. Do you allow anything for your own labour? I do. If I did not cart the cane this distance the horses and wagons would be standing idle unless I disposed of them. Of course, everyone is not the same distance from the mill that I am.
4563. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do they all get 15s. a ton? Yes.
4564. *By the Chairman*: When you started canegrowing you were nearer to a mill? Yes; I was within 3 miles.
4565. Were you using black or white labour? I was using black labour then.
4566. You had a better time then with the black labour and short cartage—what price were you getting then? We were getting 13s. a ton then.
4567. Was there any scarcity of white labour in the district last year? I cannot give you any definite idea of that. I am in a remote corner of the district where not much cane is grown, although there used to be much cane grown there at one time.
4568. Is much of the land suitable for the cultivation of cane? Nearly all of it. Most of it has been under cane.
4569. Is it freehold? Yes.
4570. Is it for sale? Yes.
4571. At what price? £4 per acre.
4572. Do you know if any was sold at that price? No; they cannot dispose of it at that price.
4574. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is it cleared? Yes.
4575. Has it been under the plough? Yes.
4576. Is there any dairying going on there? Yes.
4577. They send their cream to the butter factory? Some do, and some make butter themselves.
4578. Is there any demand for labour—Is it a district where labourers could get employment if they were settled there? I think so. There is now a large mill open there.
4579. What mill is that? The Farleigh mill.
4580. How far is it? About 5 miles, although they would run a tramline in our direction provided the cane was grown.
4581. You only want the people on the land to grow the cane? Yes.
4582. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you employed white labour for the ordinary cultivation of cane? Yes.
4583. What wages did you pay? I paid £1 a week and rations.
4584. *By the Chairman*: That is for chipping and ordinary cultivation? Yes.
4585. And you always got men at those wages? I do not require many—two usually—and I can get local labour.
4586. Is there anything else that you can tell us that you think will be of interest to us, as you have probably talked this over with the association? No, there is nothing else.

EDWARD SWAYNE, Cane Farmer, and Secretary to the Pioneer River Farmers and Graziers' Association. examined :

E. Swayne.

17 April, 1906.

4587. *By the Chairman* : Where is your farm ? At Homebush and Plane Creek.
 4588. What area have you got altogether ? 580 acres.
 4589. How much of that is under cultivation ? About 110 acres.
 4590. What proportion of that is under cane ? It is all cane land. There might be an acre or so for other crops, such as potatoes and that sort of thing.
 4591. What number of acres did you cut last year ? About 55 acres
 4592. What tonnage did you get ? Between 1,100 and 1,200 tons. That was between the two places.
 4593. Where did you crush ? At Plane Creek and Homebush
 4594. What price did you get ? I got 16s. 3½d. at Homebush and 16s. 4d. at Plane Creek.
 4595. That includes the bonus ? No ; it is exclusive of the bonus. That is the mill price.
 4596. Was it white or black labour that you employed ? Both. There were 200 tons taken off with white labour, and the balance by black labour.
 4597. How did you cut it—by day labour or contract ? The black labour worked day work under the Pacific Islanders' agreement, but the white labour was done by contract.
 4598. What did you pay for the contract work ? It was let first of all for 4s., and part of it was cut. Then there was a strike and the balance cost me 5s.
 4599. Was that for cutting and loading ? Yes.
 4600. Did you load it to trams ? No, into wagons.
 4601. *By Mr. Paget* : You say you had 200 tons of cane cut by white labour at a contract price of 4s. per ton—that was at Plane Creek or Homebush ? Some was cut at each place.
 4602. How many tons to the acre did the crop at Homebush realise ? It was a very low crop, only 6 or 7 tons to the acre.
 4603. Did you raise the price at Homebush ? Yes ; that is where the trouble was.
 4604. Did the men continue with the work when the price was raised ? One man remained, but two left, and I had to get two fresh hands to carry out the job.
 4605. The work was completed ? Yes, at the advanced price.
 4606. Where you cut the cane at Plane Creek, was it flat or hilly country ? It was flat.
 4607. The country is the same at both places ? Yes, so far as the country is concerned.
 4608. Did the cutters in both instances have to load into trams ? No : into wagons in both instances.
 4609. And was the cane trashed or untrashed ? It was untrashed.
 4610. They trashed it as they cut it ? Yes.
 4611. Suppose the cane had been trashed, what do you think would have been a fair thing to have paid ? I consider that the trashing would mean 9d. or 1s. per ton to the advantage of the cutters.
 4612. You have not let any trashing by contract ? No.
 4613. You say you think the untrashed cane means a difference of 9d. or 1s. per ton in the harvesting ? Fully 9d. per ton.
 4614. *By the Chairman* : Then at the worst you ought to have got the cane cut for 4s. 3d., if it had been trashed ? Yes.
 4615. What wages do you pay ordinarily to white men for cultivation ? I have two men on for the year. One is getting £65 per annum, and the other £70. They are left in charge of the place sometimes, and they are in a position of trust, to a certain extent. I am going backwards and forwards between the two places, but these men remain. They are both good men.
 4616. *By Mr. Paget* : Are they ploughmen only, or do they hoe ? There is no ploughing at Plane Creek, as it is all scrub. The man there gets £70 a year, and looks after the "boys." At the other place, the man in charge ploughs principally, and does anything that is required.
 4617. You are not employing any white men at the present moment for hoeing ? Yes, I put a man at hoeing.
 4618. What wages do you pay ? I pay £1 a week and found.
 4619. *By the Chairman* : What arrangements have you as regards wet days—do you pay them wet or dry ? The men who are on for the whole year are paid, but with those I employ casually, if the wet weather prevents them from being at work, I knock them off.
 4620. Suppose it commences to rain at 10 or 11 o'clock in the forenoon, would the men lose the whole day ? I would then put them on to greasing the harness or something else of that kind for the day, but if it kept on raining next day I would knock them off.
 4621. When you knock them off do you charge them for their rations ? I have never done so. I generally tell them to remain for a week and give them tucker. If I get hold of a good man I like to keep him about the place, and so I keep him in food.
 4622. Suppose a man works two odd days in the week, when he comes to settle up do you charge him with rations ? No.
 4623. *By Mr. Paget* : Is it the practice in this district ? It is not the practice so far as I am aware, but there might be one or two instances where it is done.
 4624. But it is not the practice ? No.
 4625. Have you registered a larger area of cane for the bonus this year than you did last year ? Yes. Homebush is all registered, and at Plane Creek I estimate that I will get 800 tons with white labour next year. I estimate a crop of 1,300 tons there this year. I registered a portion which I know will yield 800 tons.
 4627. Have you made any arrangements for the extra white labour you will require ? No, I have not any agreement signed, but one man spoke to me about it. I have done nothing about it yet.
 4628. Do you intend to get your cane cut by day labour or contract ? Well, the man who spoke to me has an idea of taking it on contract, and putting the men on day wages himself. I told him if he could arrange for these men to work and brought forward a suitable arrangement, I should be pleased to let him have it. That is all that has happened. I have not seen him in the meantime.
 4629. Was anything said about the price per ton in connection with the contract ? No, but I gave him an idea of what I expected to get it done for.
 4630. You have really not made any arrangements yet ? No.

- E. Swayne. 4631. *By the Chairman*: What idea did you give him? If I remember correctly, I told him I expected to get it for 4s. Some of it will be hill scrub. At Homebush I have arranged to get my cane for 4s. That arrangement is completed.
- 17 April, 1906. 4632. *By Mr. Paget*: That is for untrashed cane? Yes.
4633. You are secretary of the Pioneer River Farmers and Graziers' Association? Yes.
4634. And you are intimately acquainted with the working of the farmers at Homebush, and labour generally? Yes, I think so.
4635. Does the Colonial Sugar Refining Company arrange to take the farmers' crops off by contract? In some instances, if the farm gangs can arrange to take off the farmers' crops, they do it for portion of the farmers, but not for all.
4636. That is, the company contracts with a number of men to travel round the farms and take the crops off, and the farmers are charged what it costs? I think last year the arrangement was that the company simply introduced the labour, as it were, to the farmers and they made their own terms.
4637. Of course it must be presumed that a very much greater number of white labourers will be required in this district during the coming season than were engaged last season? Yes.
4638. Owing to the much larger area that is registered and the good crop? Yes.
4639. Has your association made any arrangements for the increased number of labourers that will be required? We have not done anything yet towards introducing labour.
4640. Have you made no plans at all? We have met delegates from the Sugar Workers' Union, and come to an arrangement about the rates of pay.
4641. Has the scale you fixed been agreed to by the Sugar Workers' Union? It has been altered.
4642. *By the Chairman*: Has your association agreed to the alterations? Yes.
4643. Then the rates have been mutually agreed upon? Yes.
4644. That is for next season? Yes.
4645. *By Mr. Paget*: Will you give us the prices that have been fixed? For a crop exceeding 18 tons to the acre, the rate for cutting and loading into drays or wagons is 3s. per ton for untrashed cane; and the prices I quote are for untrashed cane. For the same tonnage, loaded into portable trams, the rate is 3s. 6d. a ton.
4646. Does that cover the cost of haulage of the trucks on to the main line by the contractor? Yes.
4647. The farmer finds the horses? Yes. From 12 to 18 tons, inclusive, the rate is 3s. 6d. a ton into dray or wagon, and 4s. on tramlines. In both cases the contractor has to lay the tramline, move it in the field as required, pick it up again after the job is completed, and stack it alongside the main line. Under 12 tons no price is arranged. It is left open for mutual arrangement between the grower, the contractor, and the cane-cutter. In the case of burnt cane there is a reduction of 1s. a ton on those rates. In this district most of the mills make a reduction to that extent on account of burnt cane, and so the cutting rate is reduced.
4648. Burnt cane has not to be trashed? No, it is virtually trashed by the fire.
4649. *By the Chairman*: So that the contractor will really lose nothing by having to cut it for 1s. a ton less? No. I know instances in which men have consented to take 1s. a ton less if allowed to burn the cane.
4650. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you made any arrangements with regard to wages during harvesting? For cane-cutters the rate is to be 5s. a day and found.
4651. They have to cut and load? Yes.
4652. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many hours a week have they to work? There has been no arrangement about hours.
4653. *By the Chairman*: What are the usual hours you work at harvesting? Making allowances for stoppages, and for a shorter day on Saturday, I do not think it will come to ten hours a day.
4654. *By Mr. Paget*: Has any arrangement been made with regard to the wages for field hands—ploughmen and chippers? Not for ploughmen, but for horse drivers during the crushing season the rates are 25s. a week and found for the drivers of teams of not more than three horses, and 30s. for teams of more than three horses.
4655. *By the Chairman*: There was a letter in the paper this morning to the effect that it is really harder to drive a team of three horses than to drive four or six? You find lads driving two or three horses, but you would not like to trust them with eight or ten. I think you require a superior man to look after a larger team.
4656. You think it is worth the extra money to drive the larger team? Yes. It is harder to get men to drive a large team.
4657. *By Mr. Paget*: As a representative of the Farmers' Association, I suppose you are aware that something like 6,000 Pacific Islanders at present employed in the sugar districts are to be deported after the end of this year? Yes.
4658. Has your association taken any steps to supply the deficiency in the supply of labour entailed by that deportation? We have written to the State Ministry asking them to take steps to introduce 500 or 600 agricultural labourers from Europe for this district. We have also joined with the Northern sugar districts in a request to the Federal Government to introduce 5,000 or 6,000 agricultural labourers from Europe. There is a movement to that effect throughout the State, and we are acting in concert with other cane-growers' associations in the North.
4659. *By the Chairman*: What wages have you fixed for ordinary field hands? For hoeing and so on during the slack season, 3s. 4d. a day and found.
4660. Does the term "and found" mean that you cook the food and supply the labourer with what he wants, or do you weigh out his rations? In every case, so far as I know, the food is cooked and placed on the table for him.
4661. That is bread, meat, and tea? No. In many cases he gets exactly the same as the farmer's family, and in every instance where he may not feed with them, he gets whatever vegetables are procurable.
4662. Have you had any difficulty in the past in getting what labour you required at 3s. 4d. a day and found? Not during the slack season. That rate was intended to cover the crushing season also.
4663. The men work all the year round at that price? That was the intention of the conference.
4664. They would not be expected to do cane-cutting? No. The rate for that is to be 5s. a day.

4665. *By Mr. Nielson:* You understand there will always be more men required in the crushing season than in the slack season? Yes. E. Swayne.
4666. Supposing that the rates you offer in the crushing season will induce men to come here, can you suggest anything that will induce them to stop in the slack season? I have theories of my own, but I have not tried them in practice. 17 April, 1906.
4667. That is what we want—your own ideas? I think that every grower should do as much early planting in March and April as he possibly can. There are some classes of land that you cannot plant then. There is a good deal of wet land in this district which you cannot get on in those months; but wherever it is practicable and wherever possible it should be done, weather and state of land permitting. Then, from what I have read, it seems to me that in such industries as sisal hemp cultivation work would be found in the slack season. The difficulty with most of the subsidiary crops is that their harvesting coincides with the sugar-crushing season, and that emphasises the difficulty; but I have been in correspondence with Mr. Boyd, and he says that sisal hemp must be harvested once a year, but it does not matter what time of the year the harvesting takes place. There is a good deal of land in this district suitable for it, and it could be so worked that the harvesting season could come on in May and June. That would be after the wet season terminates. It could be carried on on a sufficiently large scale to enable a number of men to go to work in May and June.
4668. *By Mr. Page:* You suggest that each grower should grow a plot of sisal hemp—that is, where they have suitable land? In many cases they have not all got suitable places. But it requires no attention after it is planted till the harvesting time arrives. In that case the growers could plant sisal hemp at some little distance away from their homes, and they would only need to go to it in harvest time. The difficulty in growing crops at any distance from home is that a great deal of time would be lost going to and fro every day; but that objection would not arise in connection with the sisal hemp.
4669. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know of any land that might be occupied by sugar-workers as homesteads of their own, where they could cultivate on their own account any crops they wished? Our association advocated years ago the establishment of farms where men could raise vegetables in their spare time, and save paying rent in the town. We mentioned two or three reserves in this district on which men could settle.
4670. Have you no other land but reserves, because the reserves will be wanted some day, although they are not wanted to-day? No, I do not know of any other land.
4671. *By the Chairman:* Have you any Crown lands here? No; the Crown land is too far away from the mills. You want land adjacent to the mills.
4672. How many miles does that term "adjacent" include? They should be not more than 4 or 5 miles from it.
4673. Do you think there is any Crown land within 4 or 5 miles? I do not think so.
4674. *By Mr. Nielson:* Are there no large plantations which have one or two large paddocks of unused land that they are not cultivating? Yes; but it is not good land. You want good land for these homes. It is no use putting men on wet, poor land. Most of the good land is under cultivation, or it will be required for cultivation.
4675. Is not the land thrown out of cultivation when it has not been returning crops that make it pay? There might be areas of that description, but I cannot mention any just now. I do not know of any such land just where I live. Of course, you will have a better chance of hearing more on that point as you go round the district.
4676. What sized area do you think would be necessary for a man to make a home on? What our association asked for was for 5-acre areas. I do not think you should make the areas too large, because if you do they will grow cane and they will want to harvest the cane at the same time as the rest of the growers are harvesting.
4677. Do you not think that would be better than keeping them as labourers? Yes; but I thought you were asking about providing labour for the growers.
4678. Do you not think in the interests of the State and district that what you want here is not labourers but settlers? Yes, that is so; but nearly every farmer requires labour outside his own family at harvest time, and the question I was dealing with was finding labour for these men. If you turn the labourers into cane-growers you do not help the older cane-growers.
4679. It would all depend on the area? A good man does not require a large area of land to employ his whole time on the cane crop.
4680. You must know that there are a number of small farmers in my district who co-operate and harvest one another's crops, and scarcely employ any outside labour at all? I did not know that. We have talked this matter over amongst ourselves, and the objection to a proposal of that kind would be that each man would require his own labour at the same time. As soon as the cane is off, the ratoons require working.
4681. *By the Chairman:* Supposing a labourer who was put on a piece of land had a small crop of cane, could he not make some arrangements with his employer to allow his labourers to cut the cane? Yes, if it was only a small area; but if it was any size, say, 100 tons, the labourer would probably think it would pay him better to take it off himself. He would certainly want to take it off himself if he got a crop of 100 tons or over.
4682. *By Mr. Nielson:* You say that you have approached the State Government to get labourers for you? Yes.
4683. Where did you suggest that they should be obtained from? The letters said Europe. So far as my experience goes, the labour that would be suitable would be that obtained from Great Britain—that is, England, Ireland, and Scotland—also Germany and Scandinavia. Some of the best men now in this district came from those countries, and they came out as labourers at £1 a week. Now they are employers of labour themselves. By bringing these people out they would be labourers for a short time, and then become employers and producers themselves. It would pay the country to bring out such men without any cost to themselves.
4684. But you do not want these men to become employers? Yes, we do. We would have their services for a few years, and later on they would become employers themselves.
4685. How is it that you have not taken any steps to bring these men out yourselves? There is no general movement being made to get them out; but I know two who have expressed to me their intention of arranging to get three men out.

- E. Swayze. 4686. *By Mr. Paget*: As nominated immigrants? Yes.
4687. *By Mr. Nielson*: You are aware that you can still nominate immigrants from England under the Queensland system? Yes; but to send for a man costs £5.
- 17 April, 1906. 4688. A kanaka used to cost more than that? There were different conditions under which the kanaka came here. Dealing with this particular question, I consider it would be a good thing for the State to induce those men to come here free of cost.
4689. Why would it not be a good thing for you farmers to induce them to come here at your own cost? If you pay anything towards the cost of bringing a man out, you want to be sure that he will work for you when he comes here. Is it legal to employ these men when they come here?
4690. We are not here to give legal advice free of charge, but if you want the men to come there will be no trouble about getting them? The objection is that if I pay a certain amount out of my own pocket to bring these men here, how do I know that they will not turn round and work for someone else as soon as they arrive? It is only in a few cases that these nominated immigrants are sent for, and it is generally done by relatives and friends.
4691. But you are all members of the Farmers' Association, and surely one member would not blackleg on another by employing the men that another member of the association paid to bring out? Is there any organisation that is free from blacklegs?
4692. Are you aware that last year the Federal Parliament passed an Act which practically enables you to get labourers out under agreement under certain conditions? But has not the Minister to be satisfied that there is a necessity for such labour?
4693. And do you not think that is a very reasonable thing to ask? It is not for me to express an opinion upon that. There will be a certain amount of red tape.
4694. *By the Chairman*: Surely it would not be hard to convince the Minister that the 6,000 men going away will have to be replaced by 6,000 men? No, but as regards this nominated system of immigration, a great number of the cane-growers are natives, and they do not know any people in the old country whom they could ask to come out, and they are not acquainted with the old country personally, and do not know what labour to indent. Those who go in for nominating passengers to come out were a fair age when they left the old country, and they know whom they are getting out, but in my own case if I indented labour from England I would not know whom I was getting.
4695. *By Mr. Nielson*: Could you not correspond with a friend of yours at home, and he would know who wanted to come out, and he could let you know? Yes; but up till lately there have been so many obstacles in the road. It may be altered now, but up till lately there were obstacles which prevented people from coming here under agreement. That was according to the federal Act.
4696. Yes; but the nominated system has never been interfered with? No.
4697. *By Mr. Paget*: Why did your association write to the Federal Government, asking them to introduce 500 or 600 immigrants? So far as this district is concerned, it was the result of a meeting of a committee appointed to deal with the labour question, and it seemed to them to be desirable to move in the matter by taking a purely local view of it. They simply took the local outlook.
4698. Did your committee anticipate that there will not be sufficient white men in Queensland to supply the deficiency? They considered there will be a deficiency after the date of deportation.
4699. *By the Chairman*: Did they mention that they anticipated a shortage when writing to the Federal Government? Yes; that was the reason for their request.
4700. From what source did the communication go to the Federal Government? From us, on the understanding that similar communications were being sent from the North.
4701. You are aware that you will have to guarantee to pay the men the rates of wages current in the district? Yes. I do not think there is any objection to that.
4702. The only objection would be that the man who is not acclimatised is not worth so much as the acclimatised man? No. Of course you require nearly the same efficiency when you are paying the same money. They can hardly expect the standard wage when they arrive, but in the case of contract work, to which I am referring, it is payment by results.
4703. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you any experience of the working of the local Labour Bureau? No. I have never applied there for men.
4704. Do you know anything about the working of the bureau? No.
4705. Apparently throughout Queensland the bureau has not given satisfaction to anybody—Do you think that a properly organised bureau would be a benefit to the sugar industry? I should think it ought to be of assistance.
4706. Do you think your association would deal with it? If it were to our advantage, most certainly we should.
4707. *By Mr. Paget*: Would it not be to your advantage to deal with the Labour Bureau if it were better organised than it is at present? Yes; if it were organised so that we could get suitable labour, most certainly we should avail ourselves of it.
4708. *By Mr. Nielson*: Can you suggest any means for making the bureau of greater assistance to the sugar industry? I suppose people requiring work should be asked to register their names. I suppose that is done now; but what is wanted is some organisation by which any surplus in one district could be made available in another district.
4709. *By Mr. Paget*: That has been suggested already? Of course engaging labour through an agent does not afford you an opportunity of seeing the man yourself, and forming your own opinion as to whether he is likely to be suitable or not. There should be some means of ensuring that you get the sort of man you want.
4710. *By the Chairman*: What means would you suggest for doing that? I see it has been suggested that men who performed their work satisfactorily should carry a discharge.
4711. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would you give a reference now if a man asked you for one? Certainly.
4712. *By the Chairman*: To make the system practicable, would it not be necessary for the members of your association to agree that they would not engage any man who did not produce a discharge—A man with an indifferent discharge would simply suppress it otherwise? I think it would be quite possible, and I think it would be a good thing if they made some arrangement of the kind.
4713. Or unless he produced some document to show why he did not produce a discharge? Yes, some equivalent for it.

4714. *By Mr. Paget*: I suppose you are aware that such a system prevails in the pastoral industry? I have read that that is so.

4715. That subject has not been discussed by your association? Not yet.

4716. Would it not be very much better, in the interests of the workers as well as of the employers, if the labourers, who are nomads at present, could be settled in the sugar districts on homesteads of their own? Yes.

4717. Is it not advisable that your association should formulate a scheme whereby a number of labourers could be settled in the district? I think it is. We took the matter up some years ago, and it would be a very good thing if we moved in it again.

4718. *By the Chairman*: Do you not think that there is no time like the present? Yes.

4719. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you aware that the Secretary for Lands is taking steps at the present time to bring that into operation here? I saw something in the Press to that effect.

4720. He has practically promised to try to initiate the system here? Yes; and I think I can safely say that, if our association thought it would strengthen his hands in any way, we would take the matter up at our next meeting.

4721. There are lands in the district that would be suitable? Yes.

4722. Even although they are further away from the mills than the 5 or 6 miles that you suggest? When I mentioned that distance I had in my mind the men getting home on Saturday night and returning on the Sunday night. At any rate, it should be under 10 or 12 miles for the men's own sake.

4723. Will you consult with the president of your association and see whether the question cannot be discussed by the association? Yes. There is no doubt that the report of your sitting to-day will furnish a reason for bringing it before the next meeting of the association in about three week's time.

4724. Judging by the evidence we have got up to the present, there is very much less trouble during the harvesting with labourers who are settled in the district than with labourers who have no settled homes? Of course. I have heard that a great many of the men we had last year have gone out West again. If they had homes here that would not occur. There is a lot of land on the north side of the river which might be made available, but Mr. O'Riordan can give you more definite information as to suitable areas in that locality.

4725. Is there anything we have not touched upon that you would like to refer to? Regarding the deportation of the kanakas, it seems to me that there is a general opinion that there will be a difficulty in getting them away from Queensland at the exact date fixed, and it will be illegal to employ them after that time. If some arrangement could be made by which they would be allowed, under permits, to clear land during the time they are awaiting deportation, it would be a good thing. That would not interfere with the bounty being paid upon the land. From what I can gather, the cost of clearing land by white labour is going to be almost prohibitive in some cases.

4726. Even with the bounty? Yes. An instance came under my notice the other day where it cost £11 an acre to clear forest land. That might have been excessive; but if it is going to cost anything like that, there will not be a great deal of land cleared after the coloured labour is gone.

4727. *By the Chairman*: That is burnt off and stumped? Yes; got ready for the plough.

4728. *By Mr. Nielson*: I have heard of a place in my district that cost more than that to clear by kanakas? It has not been so here.

4729. *By the Chairman*: What wages would you suggest they should be paid? The wages they are working for now. Overtime "boys" are now getting anything from £20 to £30 a year. In fact, I am paying a "boy" £35. But, when it comes to such a high price as that, there is not very much in it.

4730. What do you have to pay for clearing land? The contract price for the land I am speaking of was 4s. 6d. a tree to grub and run the roots. The balance of the cost is made up by the hauling, burning off, and filling in the holes.

4731. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would it not be possible to dispose of a lot of the firewood to plantations? In some cases that is done. I take it the "boys" would sooner work and earn wages than be idle.

4732. *By the Chairman*: At Childers we saw a number of kanakas, who spoke of the risk of starvation, and when I asked them if they would go North they said, "Yes; but not under £1 a week and rations"? If they wanted such wages as these, it would not be possible; but a great many of them would go on working at the wages they have been getting in the past.

4733. Would that be a heavy class of work—Felling timber and grubbing timber is heavy work, is it not? Yes, at a certain time of the year; but the deportation will commence just after the new year, and the ground is soft then and not nearly so hard as it is later on.

4734. Is there anything else you wish to give us? I have some figures here showing the cost of the rearing and production of cane under the two methods of black and white labour.

4735. *By Mr. Paget*: Will you hand them in? Yes. [Statement subsequently tendered.]

4736. You employ kanakas? Yes.

4738. The question has arisen as to the liability of the employer to maintain the islander after his engagement has expired, and I want to know whether you maintain the islander after his agreement has expired until his departure or re-engagement, under section 5 of "The Pacific Islanders Act of 1892," or do you take advantage of Regulation 5, issued on the 25th of February, 1896? I do not maintain them after their agreements have expired.

4739. You take advantage of Regulation 5? I pay the "boys" off, and, so far as I know, they walk about for a few days and then sign on again.

4740. But in the event of their staying on your place after their agreements have expired, would you feed them? I never have done so.

4741. *By the Chairman*: Do you know that if a "boy" does not re-engage you are liable for the extra money to send him home? There has been a lot of talk about that, and we thought that law was *ultra vires*. I would like to give the figures showing the relative cost of producing a crop of sugar-cane with white labour and coloured labour, respectively:—On forest land cane planted with white labour (bounty conditions) cost £7 18s. 2d. per acre; and with coloured labour (old conditions) £5 1s. 11d. per acre, which was equal to 12s. 9d. per ton for white labour, and 7s. 3d. per ton for coloured labour. On scrub land cane planted with white labour (bounty conditions) cost £12 7s. 6d. per acre, and with coloured labour (old conditions) £5 17s. 6d. per acre, which, at per ton, meant white labour 11s. 9d., and coloured labour 5s. 13d. For forest land an average crop of 17 tons, for scrub land an average crop of 30 tons per acre have been calculated on. I think it is also worth noting by your Commission that while the increase in the number of white growers from the year 1900 to 1905 has been 41 per cent., the number of coloured growers has increased by no less than 61 per cent. during the same term.

E. Swayne.
17 April, 1906.

ROBERT ADAMS, Cane Farmer, examined :

R. Adams. 4742. *By the Chairman*: Where is your farm? At Sandy Creek, 11 miles from Mackay.

4743. What is the size of your property? 12½ acres.

17 April, 1906. 4744. How much of that is under cane? About 50 acres.

4745. How much did you cut last year? 285 tons.

4746. From how many acres? 28 acres.

4747. Did you cut it by white or black labour? By black labour.

4748. Did you form any estimate of what it cost you to cut it? Yes, it cost 2s. per ton to cut and load it.

4749. To load it on to the trams? No; to load it on to the wagons, and then I had to lift and load it on to the trams myself.

4750. Was that trashed cane? No, untrashed.

4751. Did you form any idea of what the "boys" could cut a day? They averaged about 30 tons a week. I had two "boys," and they cut 15 tons each.

4752. At six days a week that would be 2½ tons each day? Yes.

4753. Have you your cane registered for the bounty? Most of it.

4754. Where do you propose to get your labour next year—are you able to get sufficient local labour? I will stand my chance along with the rest.

4755. Will you get it from this locality, or trust to the floating labour? I have spoken to two or three, but they are already engaged, and I will have to depend on the casual labour that comes along.

4756. Will you cut your cane by day labour or by contract? By contract.

4757. What will you give? I will abide by the decision arrived at by the representatives.

4758. You will pay the rates that the association decides shall be paid? Yes.

4759. Those are the rates that Mr. Swayne gave us? Yes.

4760. Do you employ white labour to do chipping and that sort of thing? Yes.

4761. What do you pay? £1 a week and found.

4762. Have you any difficulty in getting that class of labour? Yes. I had to plough out 8 acres of cane through not being able to get anyone to chip it.

4763. Is there more white labour now than there was in former years? Yes.

4764. Is the labour absorbed in this district increasing? Yes; it is increasing.

4765. Do you ever use the Labour Bureau here? No.

4766. You just depend on the people passing through here? Yes.

4767. *By Mr. Paget*: You heard the evidence which Mr. Swayne gave—Is there anything you would like to add to that? I would like to endorse what Mr. Swayne said in regard to workers' homes.

4768. *By the Chairman*: What do you think about it? I endorse what he says, but I have certain ideas on the subject myself. In regard to the area, it ought to be according to the quality of the land to be settled on. As Mr. Swayne said, if you give a man 10 acres of first-class land you defeat the object you have in view of settling labour here for the sugar industry.

4769. If he is a good man, then it is desirable he should be on the land? But it increases the difficulty, and makes an increased demand for labour.

4770. *By Mr. Nielson*: And a very good thing, too? Yes, it is; but it is not the end you have in view.

4771. *By the Chairman*: If it became known that men could get on like that, would it not induce others to go on the land, too? But with regard to supplying labour for those engaged in the industry it does not seem to meet the end which they have in view.

4772. They would not be independent? I do not think so, especially if they had big families.

4773. You would have their labour for three years, and that would be something gained? I do not think that they would flock here in such large numbers that it would increase the supply to a very great extent, although I think it would be one of the means of keeping men in the district.

4774. Can you suggest any other means? Yes; the scheme initiated by the Workers' Union here. That is a proposal to set apart a piece of land so that labourers who are out of employment could come to this farm, as we term it, and be employed until such time as there was employment for them.

4775. *By Mr. Paget*: That is what is known as a labour colony? Yes.

4776. *By the Chairman*: That would be assisted by the State? Yes, in the first instance; but it ought to be conducted on business lines and made to pay for itself.

4777. There is always a percentage of human beings who will not do their best—What would you do with these men? We have got to keep them in some manner at the present time.

4778. What would you suggest going on as a start? If we instituted such a scheme as we are talking about now, and those men would not work, then the only thing to do would be to let them starve.

4779. *By Mr. Nielson*: What do you suggest they should grow on these farms? I suggest that all manner of crops should be grown. It would be like an experiment here. You read all sorts of things in the papers. Take the *Agricultural Journal*, for instance; they are always advocating people going in for different varieties of crops, but the farmers do not want to do so because they do not know what they are going to get out of them. Those things could be experimented on here.

4780. You would like the Government to do everything, and take all the risk, but you do not want the Government to take any of the profit? The Government are always preaching that there is profit in these things, and they would get all the profit there is in them.

4781. Is there any suitable land here for that? There is none that I know of. There are only these estates that are lying idle; they are the only lands that I know of that are suitable within a reasonable distance.

4782. Are there any estates lying idle here? There are several lying idle on the north side of the river.

4783. *By the Chairman*: There has been cane on it, and it has gone out of cultivation? Yes.

4784. Can those estates be purchased? I think so. There is a gentleman appointed by our association to come here, and he can give you that information.

JOHN O'RiORDAN, Cane Farmer, Dumbleton Estate, examined:

J. O'Riordan.

4785. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer on the Dumbleton Estate.

4786. How far is that from Mackay? Between 7 and 8 miles, on the river bank.

4787. What area do you possess? 50 acres; and I have leased 20 acres and 90 acres, chiefly for grass, 17 April, 1906.

4788. What area did you cut last year? About 25 acres.

4789. For what tonnage? 386 tons.

4790. By black or white labour? I have had no blacks for the last eight years.

4791. Did you cut by contract or by day labour? By contract last year; previous to that by day labour.

4792. Trashed or untrashed? Untrashed.

4793. What price per ton did you pay? I gave 4s. a ton for loading on to drays.

4794. Was it a co-operative gang? No; a contractor with day labourers.

4795. Do you know what the contractor paid his men? 27s. 6d. a week and found.

4796. Had he any difficulty in getting men at those rates? No. He got men that were not used to the work in the beginning, and he had to teach them. Some he had to let go, but there were one or two who remained through with him.

4797. *By Mr. Paget:* How long were they cutting your cane? From August to the end of October.

4798. *By the Chairman:* What did you get for your cane? 15s.

4799. *By Mr. Paget:* And 4s. 8d. bonus? Yes; 19s. 8d. 15s. was the mill price.

4800. *By the Chairman:* How much do you expect to cut this year? About 35 acres.

4801. Do you propose to cut it in the same way? That I do not know. Long before this time last year I accepted my contract, but I have had no applications so far.

4802. I suppose you are a member of the association? Yes.

4803. You cut at their price? Yes; I go by the association rate as far as possible.

4804. *By Mr. Paget:* How do you propose to cut your crop? I cannot answer that.

4805. I hope you are not trusting to Providence? It is a bit early yet. I believe there are plenty of men about, but I have not met them.

4806. Surely you will not allow your crop to remain on the land for want of trying to get labour? By no means. If all else fails, I shall have to turn my own family to it and take off as much as I can.

4807. *By the Chairman:* You are not in such a bad state as that? I am not. I believe I shall get men, but I have not got them so far.

4808. *By Mr. Paget:* You have not had any trouble hitherto in getting the number of white men you wanted? No.

4809. *By the Chairman:* Do you think it would be desirable to endeavour to locate the travelling labour in the district? I do.

4810. Can you suggest any means by which that might be done? The only practicable scheme is the one which has been before you already. But there is one objection that I see to that—Will the men accept it?

4811. Do you not know that a great many men from the southern States come here to cut cane? Yes.

4812. Do you not think those men would rather settle here than go backwards and forwards every year, paying steamer fares and losing time travelling? They might. All my late men were from Rockhampton. Possibly they may turn up yet, but I question if the general run of men will make homes here. There are a lot of men I know who will not settle down.

4813. Those are single men? Yes. They are some of the very best men, but they do not seem to care about settling down. Those are the men I expect to get by and by.

4814. Do you not think a man gets tired of that life? I have not had much experience, but I have heard that men who are used to travelling will not settle down.

4815. You know a great deal about the land on the north side? Yes.

4816. What land is available for settlement up there? There are three estates which belong, I believe, at present to the banks.

4817. What are the names of those estates? The Cedars, Nindaroo, and Habana.

4818. *By Mr. Nielson:* What is the area of the three? I could not say, but they are very big estates. In fact, with the exception of Farleigh, they comprise the whole of the land on the north side.

4819. *By the Chairman:* They are all out of cultivation now? Yes.

4820. In what way are they being utilised? Some parts of the estates are being purchased as farms from the banks, and I do not see why the banks should not be prepared to sell the rest, if necessary.

4821. What price have the banks been getting? I could not tell you definitely, but from £2 to £3 an acre.

4822. Is there any mill there? The estates surround the Farleigh mill.

4823. Do you not think that men who want to settle down would be glad to have a piece of land on estates like that? If they felt like me they would.

4824. *By Mr. Paget:* Could they get it now if they wished? I think so. I do not know people's private business, but I think all the available lands in the Mackay district are for sale if the owners can dispose of them.

4825. *By Mr. Nielson:* At a price? Yes.

4826. *By the Chairman:* Would you pay £2 or £3 an acre for it if you wanted cane land? For some of it, yes; for some of it, no.

4827. Is it cleared? The arable areas are cleared, because cane was grown there years before. Brush has grown up again.

4828. It would all want brushing? Yes, and bringing under cultivation again. There is no cane now. There are some virgin soils yet in the very top of the mountains. I do not know who owns those places. They have not been cleared.

4829. How far are those lands from town? Up to 10 or 12 miles.

4830. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you referring to Mount Blackfellox? Yes. It is nearer to Farleigh mill than some of the other lands I speak of, but it is very precipitous.

4831. *By the Chairman:* Do you know of any Crown lands that would be suitable for settlement in small areas? No.

- J. O'Riordan. 4832. You believe there are none? I have never been in the districts where there is Crown land, so that I cannot say anything about it.
- 17 April, 1906. 4833. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many members are there in your association? I do not know. We have a branch on the Farleigh Estate, with a membership of twenty-five or thirty.
4834. Were you present when the rates of wages were fixed? I was not present when the rates were fixed, but I was at the meetings before that, when the rates were considered.
4835. Are those the maximum rates? I take them to be maximum rates.
4836. You want to pay as much less as you can? No; I want to do a fair thing. I would not ask a man to work under those rates. I would offer him those rates for contract work, and expect him to do it for nothing less. Before there were any rates fixed I paid more; but I was an exception. I paid too much last year—more than my neighbours—but I did not grumble at that. I fancy the rates are very fair now.
4837. *By the Chairman*: You would not offer a man less? Not at the tonnage.
4838. *By Mr. Nielson*: If large numbers of men come into the district this year, will your association lower those rates? No; the association have no power to do that. So far as I know, the rates are fixed.
4839. Do I understand that the association has agreed with the Sugar Workers' Union not to alter the rates? That is so; and the growers are requested by the council of the association to abide by those rates.
4840. If men come up from New South Wales on behalf of a large party of men in that State, to ascertain what rates are obtainable, can they rely upon those rates not being reduced? I believe they can.
4841. We want to know? I am only one member of the association, but I believe I can answer for the association that they can rely on those rates.
4842. For the present year? Yes. Unforeseen circumstances might bring about a change, but not during the present year, at any rate.
4843. Do you trash your cane in this district? No, it is not a rule of this district. In a few cases where kanakas are employed, it is done.
4844. But that is only to keep them at something? Yes. The farmers do not do it.
4845. *By Mr. Paget*: We have had a great deal of evidence from other members of the association, but is there anything else you would like to add? There is one thing about the Government putting the extra cost on to the employer for sending the kanakas away. I am not a "boy" employer myself.
4846. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did you ever see the agreement that is signed? I have not seen it.
4847. Well, that fixes it—It is the agreement that does the thing, and the Government are not doing it at all? I employed kanakas at one time, and paid for them to come into the country. I would suggest that "boys" who are married should be allowed to settle on land in the Mackay district which is now given over to the weeds. You must remember that we have grown our cane just for the accommodation of labour.
4848. And not for personal profit at all? No. It is simply because the white man will not go to the top of the mountain.
4849. I am growing cane, but it is not to accommodate anyone—it is for what I can get out of it? I suggest that, instead of compelling the married "boys" to leave the State—especially those who have been to school here—you should allow them to grow cane up in the mountains in the parts where the white man will not go. They will then be right away from the white men.
4850. *By the Chairman*: What mountains do you refer to? I refer to the sugar mountains of Mackay—the mountains that are at present lying to the west.
4851. Blackfellow's Mountain? Yes; and other places, too. There are instances where growing cane on the mountains is working very well.
4852. You advocate in the case of the kanakas that they should be settled on the reserves? I am not advocating anything for the kanakas at all. I am only mentioning this because it might be hard on the "boys" who have been here for a quarter of a century, and have married and raised families, if they have to leave the State. It would be wrong to send these children of the kanakas back to the islands. If we sent these "boys" up into the mountains they would keep to themselves, and would be able to make a living there without interfering with anyone.
4853. *By Mr. Paget*: And keep the mills supplied? Yes; and the country would benefit by it.
4854. They are precipitous mountains of one in one, or one in two? Yes.
4855. *By the Chairman*: Do you refer to the reserves? They are natural reserves for the black men, because the white men will not take them.
4856. You advocate that? Yes.
4857. Is there anything else you wish to say? No.

J. Smart.

JOHN SMART, Manager of The Palms Plantation, examined:

- 17 April, 1906. 4858. *By the Chairman*: What are you? Manager of The Palms Plantation.
4859. How far is the plantation from Mackay? About 7 miles.
4860. Is the whole estate fit for cane cultivation? There are about 3,000 acres under cultivation.
4861. What is the area of the estate? A little over 8,000 acres.
4862. What is the character of the remaining land? Mostly clayey wet land that is unsuitable for cultivation. It is grazing land.
4863. What area did you cut last year? A little over 1,800 acres on our own estate. Our tenants cut about 600 acres, making a total of 2,400 acres.
4864. What tonnage did you average? A little over 18 tons.
4865. Did you cut it by white or black labour? By black labour.
4866. Have you any estimate as to what it cost to cut? We do not go into particulars, but it was about 1s. 9d. a ton.
4867. Was it trashed or untrashed? Trashed.
4868. Has any of your estate been registered for the bonus? Not yet.
4869. Then you will use black labour this year? Yes.
4870. What area are you purposing to plant next year? This year we shall plant about 500 acres if we can. It all depends on the weather.

J. Smart.

17 April 1906.

4871. Some of that will be replanted? It will be all replanted land.
4872. You are not intending to bring any new land under cultivation? Not this year.
4873. You will have to fall back on white labour after the 31st December? Not if we can help it.
4874. What will you do if you cannot get labour to take the place of the kanakas? We will let it out to white farmers if possible.
4875. On a royalty? Yes, with the right of purchase.
4876. What royalty do you propose to ask? 1s. a ton.
4877. On what terms are you prepared to sell? I suppose the company are prepared to sell the whole estate if necessary.
4878. What about the price? It will vary, according to the quality of the land, from £5 to £10.
4879. With the crop on it? The crop will be at a valuation.
4880. In case you cannot do that, are you making any arrangements to procure white labour next year? Not at present. We are trusting to getting farmers. We do not want any white labour—we are leaving that to the farmers.
4881. *By Mr. Paget*: How many farmers supply cane to The Palms mill? About twenty.
4882. Are they growing it upon the company's land or upon their own land? Our farmers are all on the company's land. There are six others outside whom I did not include.
4883. How many white growers are there among them? There are six coloured men.
4884. Are they Pacific Islanders or Asiatics? Asiatics.
4885. Are they small growers? Yes.
4886. Is the number of coloured growers for your mill increasing or decreasing? Increasing.
4887. At what rate? There are about five more this year already. Polynesians who have never grown cane for us before have taken up the land during the last two months.
4888. *By the Chairman*: How many Polynesians are taking up land? About thirty.
4889. Are they "exempt boys"? No.
4890. *By Mr. Paget*: Are they leasing land or purchasing it through trustees? They are only leasing it from the company.
4891. What are the terms? A royalty of 1s. a ton.
4892. For how many years? For three years, with the option of renewal.
4893. When you are making your arrangements with these Polynesians, are they advised by the Polynesian Inspector, or do they treat direct with you? They treat direct with me, but they go to the Polynesian Inspector first, and tell him what they are going to do.
4894. You are aware of that? Yes; I send them all there.
4895. *By the Chairman*: Do you not know that some of them will not be able to carry out that agreement? We do not know that so far.
4896. You know, as a matter of fact, that they cannot stop here after the 31st December? Possibly they cannot get away, and they might just as well be on the land as anywhere else.
4897. What will be their position if they have to leave—Will you give them compensation for their crop? Yes; they will get a valuation for their cane just the same as a white man would get.
4898. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is that part of the terms of the agreement? Yes.
4899. *By Mr. Paget*: In the event of your being unable to lease the freehold during the present year, is it your company's intention to continue cultivation on a large scale? Not on a large scale. We will do as much as we can so far as we think it is profitable.
4900. With white labour? Yes. There will be nothing else, as we cannot employ kanakas.
4901. Then it is your company's intention, at the end of the present year, to register the properties? To try to.
4902. And you have no experience of either doing the ordinary cultivation or harvesting cane with white men? No. We had them some considerable time ago on the land, but they were not very encouraging.
4903. I am talking about things as they exist now? No, we have not got them, except the ploughmen.
4904. How many white men do you employ on an average? We have fifty white men on the estate, and they will be added to in the crushing season. They will not be added to very considerably, as those in the fields will go into the mills.
4905. What do you pay for field work? We pay the ploughmen £1 a week, and the other men in proportion, up to £4 a week.
4906. What is the lowest wage you pay for white labour? We pay £1 a week for men; and learners, who are young lads, get from 12s to 15s.
4907. *By the Chairman*: That includes rations? Yes. The married men also get houses and fuel.
4908. *By Mr. Paget*: Your company is a large employer of kanaka labour, is it not? Yes.
4909. Can you give the Commission any suggestions as to the best means of deporting the kanakas next year? I have no idea in regard to that, as it will be a very difficult question to answer. I think possibly one-third of them will remain at the beginning of next year, and possibly more, but we cannot tell. One-third of them will remain in Queensland for three months.
4910. It is estimated that there are 5,000 or 6,000 to go home, and we would like some suggestions as to how they are to go? I would not like to answer that question, as I have no idea on the subject, and it is a difficult matter to answer it.
4911. You have no practical knowledge of the islands? None.
4912. The question of maintaining the islanders after their agreement has expired has cropped up, and I would like to know if your company maintain their re-engagement islanders when their agreement has expired until they re-engage again or go home? If they decide to go home we keep them for a month, or until they are able to get a passage.
4913. Suppose you paid off a number of islanders, and they remained here for a time, would you maintain them? Yes, for a month.
4914. But if they walked about for longer than a month, do you think it is a fair thing that they should maintain themselves? Yes.
4915. Or that somebody else should maintain them? They will either have to enter into another agreement, or else go home by that time. The Polynesian inspector will see that they either enter into another agreement, or else go home.
4916. *By the Chairman*: Do you know a "boy" named Maluini? No.

- J. Smart. 4917. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did you see something in the Press about some evidence which some "boys" gave at Bundaberg—"boys" who came down from Mackay to join a ship at Bundaberg? Yes
- 17 April, 1906. 4918. One of the "boys" said he came from The Palms? I did not see that. I did not see any mention of The Palms.
4919. *By Mr. Paget*: He said his name was Maluini, and that he worked at The Palms, and he had a wife and three children? I believe there was a name something like that.
4920. He complained that it cost him £10 15s. 2d. to get to Bundaberg, and pay his extra passage home? Yes. I saw that, but I did not see anything about him coming from The Palms.
4921. He said so himself? It was not in the evidence I read in the *Queenslander*.
4922. *By the Chairman*: It is here in the official record of the evidence? I did not see it.
4923. This man had a wife and four children, and one of the children died at the Gladstone Hospital, and the man complained that it cost him £10 15s. 2d. to take himself, wife, and children down to Bundaberg, and the extra cost of the passage to the islands over and above the £5? When we make an agreement with "boys" they are always informed of the terms of the agreement, and they get an opportunity of going to the islands when their agreements expire; but if they wish to remain here for their own benefit, and do not want to go home, they are told that if the fares rise in the future they will have to pay the extra amount themselves, and they say they are perfectly willing to pay it.
4924. *By Mr. Nielson*: You know you are liable to pay that extra money? No, not that I am aware of. We have to pay £5 for their return passage, but if they wish to remain they will have to pay anything extra themselves.
4925. If it costs £7 to send home the "boys" you have, you know you will have to pay the extra money? Do you mean the newchum "boys"?
4926. No, the re-engaged "boys"? I am not aware that we have to pay. The Government took the whole thing out of our hands when they took £5 from us for each "boy." The Government were satisfied, and so were we.
4929. *By the Chairman*: You do not know that counsel gave opinion that the last employer is liable? I did not know that.
4930. Are you aware that the officer in charge at Brisbane informed the officer at Mackay to collect the extra £2 from the last employer? Yes; but we disputed that.
4931. You cannot dispute it, because it has been decided that that is the law? I have not heard that.
4932. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you taking any steps to free yourselves from the liability? No; we are taking no measures until we see that we are liable.
4933. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you refused to pay it? Yes.
4934. Did you refuse to pay it in the case of that particular "boy"? I never heard of him.
4935. *By the Chairman*: The "boy" said he was employed by Mr. Campbell at The Palms? There is no Mr. Campbell at The Palms.
4936. *By Mr. Paget*: It is extremely difficult for us to find out the exact employer when the "boy" is away? The "boy" I refused to pay for has not gone yet.
4937. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is he still here? He was there on Saturday.
4938. *By the Chairman*: You will have to fall back on white labour for the cultivation of your cane, so can you suggest any means by which labour of that class can be made permanent in the district and can be encouraged to settle down and remain here, and have the labour at the disposal of the grower? That would be one difficulty. I have seen men with areas of 20 acres and they settled there with their families, but when they want to harvest their crop that is the time we want to harvest ours.
4939. They would not necessarily become canegrowers, but they should have homesteads of sufficient area where they can live and have a cow, and go in for dairying, and have something for the women to go in for, but they need not necessarily be canegrowers? I understood they would become canegrowers, and become employers of labour themselves.
4940. Do you not think it would lessen the difficulty if we could settle men in that way? It would lessen the difficulty if we could get men to settle on the land, and also get their labour.
4941. Do you think such a scheme is practicable? I have never thought it out.
4942. You fear that they will want to be harvesting their own cane just when you want their labour? Yes. If they do not grow cane I do not know what they will do.
4943. They would not necessarily want to do much more than keep a garden patch for their own use? That would not keep them alive.
4944. *By Mr. Paget*: But they would be earning wages during the greater part of the year, and they would only work on their holdings during the off season? I do not think there are many men employed in the off season, even amongst the farmers. The demand comes during the harvest season.
4945. *By the Chairman*: When there are no kanakas to fall back upon, will there not be a constant demand for men? Such a state of affairs will right itself in time, but it is difficult to see how it can be done.
4946. You cannot offer any suggestion? No; I would not like to say anything.
4947. *By Mr. Paget*: How many white men would you require on the company's estates if all the coloured labour were deported? If you tell me the kind of men they are, I shall be able to give you some idea.
4948. Good working men? We have not found them so dependable.
4949. *By the Chairman*: Do you not think the reason for that is that you have been dependent upon a floating class of labour? In a measure that is so.
4950. *By Mr. Nielson*: You could hardly expect to get a permanent man unless you could offer him a permanent job? We do not need them all the year. We need them when the cane is being harvested.
4951. *By the Chairman*: When you no longer have coloured labour you will need a certain amount of white labour all the year round? I suppose so. We find now that we have to change them pretty frequently, or else they change themselves pretty frequently.
4952. *By Mr. Paget*: How many extra white men would you require on the company's estates to fill the places of the coloured labourers who are to be deported? If you tell me the kind of men I will tell you. It is difficult to determine how many men we shall need with the class of men who come here.
4953. You cannot assist us in that matter? I would not like to hazard an opinion.
4954. Then how do you expect the Commission to hazard an opinion? I could not give you an opinion.

1955. *By the Chairman:* Many of the kanakas have been here for twenty years and upwards? Yes. J. Smart.
 There are some who were on the estate before I came, and I have been here twenty-two years.
 1956. Would you suggest a time limit beyond which you think it would be unfair to compel them to return to their islands? I would leave it to the "boy's" own wish whether he should return to the islands or not. If he wanted to go home, it would not matter if he had been here fifty years.
 1957. Is there anything else you would like to touch upon? No. The labour supply is the one trouble.

HUGH MCCREADY, Sugar Planter, Palmyra Plantation, examined.

1958. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A sugar-planter on Palmyra Plantation. H. McCready.
 1959. What is the area? About 1,100 acres.
 1960. How far is it from Mackay? About 9 miles. 17 April, 1906.
 1961. What area have you under cane cultivation? About 600 acres.
 1962. What area did you cut last year? About 350 acres.
 1963. What was the average tonnage? Not very high—about 9 tons.
 1964. White or black labour? Both.
 1965. Is there any of your estate registered for the bonus? None.
 1966. Have you formed any estimate of what it cost you to cut and load? Is a ton, loaded on to drays.
 1967. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you any farmers supplying cane to your mill? There are four at present.
 1968. Are any of them coloured men? One.
 1969. *By the Chairman:* Is he a kanaka? No; a Malay.
 1970. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you prepared to lease your property to farmers for the purpose of growing cane for your mill? I am prepared to sell my property if I can get anyone to purchase it, either as a whole or cut up into farms—that is, if I can find anyone with the money to buy it. I am not prepared to give it to a person on the chance of getting paid for it after a term of years, when I presume the bonus will be withdrawn.
 1971. That is, you are not prepared to sell on terms? I am not prepared to sell except on terms which will make me tolerably safe. For example, I am prepared to take one-third cash and give terms for the balance, but not to extend over the five years that the bonus is supposed to last. I am very anxious to do business on those terms.
 1972. *By the Chairman:* What do you want per acre? That depends upon the land. It will vary according to quality.
 1973. Can you give us the minimum and the maximum? From £5 to £8 an acre.
 1974. What about the crop growing on it? The crop would have to be taken at a valuation.
 1975. *By Mr. Nielson:* Would your land be worth from £5 to £8 an acre for any other crop than sugar? No. There is no land that would be value for that for any other crop that I know unless the labour conditions were more favourable. We are in the tropics, where nothing but tropical crops can be produced successfully.
 1976. You still have faith in the sugar industry? I have no faith in the sugar industry under the conditions that we are supposed to submit to now. I have no faith in white labour.
 1977. Yet you would not reduce the price of your land? I suppose I shall have to reduce it if I am compelled to do so. We must make the most of the position.
 1978. You are not that frightened of the position of the sugar industry that you are going to sacrifice your land? Every pound I have spent on the place has not been wasted, but has been spent to good purpose. I have already spent £24,000, and I should be very glad to dispose of the property for half that sum at the present moment. That shows the amount of faith I have in the future.
 1979. *By Mr. Paget:* In the event of your not being able to dispose of a portion of your property during the current year, is it your intention to continue cultivation on a large scale after the end of this year? With white labour?
 1980. With white or any other labour? I either know too little or too much to attempt such a thing.
 1981. *By Mr. Nielson:* You would not give it a trial? I have already given it a trial. I have been fifty years at the business, and know all about it, so far as that is concerned, at any rate.
 1982. You do not intend to try it again? I do not intend to try what I consider an impossibility.
 1983. What was your object in coming here to-day? I came very unwillingly. I was asked to come.
 1984. With what object? With the object of giving my impressions. I was asked to give evidence on what I consider the position will be after the withdrawal of kanaka labour.
 1985. You understand the object of this Commission is not to find out whether the industry can be worked by white labour or not—The retention of the kanaka has nothing whatever to do with this Commission? I was asked to come here with a specific object, and I came here for that purpose.
 1986. You have to take it for granted that the deportation of the kanaka is to take place, and what we are inquiring about is with reference to the best means of deporting them and substituting white men? Understanding that I was to come here and give evidence as to what I consider the position of the industry will be on the withdrawal of the kanaka labour, I drafted out a few rough memos, and perhaps I might refer to them and we will understand one another better. I will first deal with the effect of the withdrawal of kanaka labour. Stimulated by the bonus, and whilst good seasons last, a false confidence in the future will be created, which, on the withdrawal of the bonus and the recurrence of the indifferent seasons to which we are so liable, will create disaster. The withdrawal of the kanaka labour will gradually force the industry into Southern latitudes less congenial to the cane, but more favourable for white labour, and nearer to the great centres of the white-working population. Even in those parts, when the bonus ceases and protection in the usual form becomes inoperative by reason of the production overtaking the consumption—a position already in sight—the industry must become unprofitable. It will eventually, in fact is already, forcing the industry into the hands of the small growers of a few acres, mainly and increasingly of alien and foreign nationality who, tempted by the bonus, are in many cases forcing their unfortunate wives and children to take the place of hired labour. Already a comparison of the country school attendance during the first and last six months of the year would be instructive. This system will increase a foreign element possessing fewer scruples to make beasts of burthen of their wives and children, and which will eventually oust the British element. I may say that I am referring to the tropics generally from here North.

H. McCready. 4987. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think the kanakas will not make room for the British element? The kanakas have enabled us to start an industry that gave 90 per cent. of the money spent in the production of sugar to the white people. I can give you a record of twenty-four years to prove that indisputably if you want it. This system will also have a marked tendency to degrade and deteriorate the health and stamina of future generations. If mothers are forced into the field in that way, we cannot expect very healthy children. It also defeats the original object of the bonus, given presumably to enable growers to offer an increased rate of wages to the white labourer.

4988. *By Mr. Paget*: In what way does it defeat the object of the bonus? It defeats it in this way: People get their wives and children to do the work that is generally required of hired men. It is a very nice thing for them while it lasts.

4989. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think that the wives and children are included in the term "white labour," supposing what you say is correct? I think it is an undesirable state of affairs to force women and children to do manual labour in the tropics. I have had a long experience in the tropics in various parts of the world and I have never seen that sort of thing succeed yet. It has always resulted in the deterioration of the race. It is the natural law, and no one can alter it. Certain things can only thrive under certain conditions. With the removal of protection, and when our production overtakes the consumption, it will be impossible to compete with other countries in the production of sugar.

4990. It is just the same with kanaka labour—You cannot compete with other countries with kanaka labour? Yes, we can. I think we can, because it would cost us very much less to produce it. We can produce sugar for so much less now. I am looking to the future more than the present. We still have the kanakas. When the kanakas go we will be entirely in the hands of white labour, and as we are in the tropics we can never expect a really good man to come up here. We cannot expect good men to come here and make a fair living.

4991. Are you not offering them better wages? I consider that with the withdrawal of protection the farmers will not be in a position to offer higher wages. So long as the country submits to giving the industry the protection it is giving now, I do not deny that the industry will be kept on its legs, and the small man who is getting his work done by his wife and children will make a very good thing out of it. I do not dispute that for a moment. They will make a very good thing out of it while it lasts, but when it ceases what will be the position? The country will have spent £1,000,000—not to save an important industry, but to destroy it.

4992. That will be at the end of five years? Yes, but there will be a number of other victims. I am one of the old victims, and I have to go, and there will be hundreds of others created in the meantime.

4993. There is time enough to tackle that difficulty when it arrives? Perhaps I am too far-seeing. If I was satisfied to do as others are doing I would say, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

4994. But it is no good shaking hands with the devil before you meet him? That is true; but I believe in looking the thing straight in the face.

4995. But you have not got its face yet? Yes I have.

4996. How much protection would you require to grow sugar with kanaka labour? Do you mean in the tropics?

4997. Yes, with kanaka labour? We are prepared to compete with the world.

4998. This is the first time I ever heard of it? We do not want protection if we have the kanakas. Mind you, I do not say it will be a success, but we are prepared to meet it. We are prepared to meet natural conditions.

4999. *By Mr. Paget*: Before federation had you to pay duty on sugar entering the other States just the same as other parts of the world? Yes.

5000. Were you competing with the world then? Yes; until our production overtook our consumption, and the protection was then inoperative.

5001. But before federation did you not have to pay the same duties on your sugar entering New South Wales as the sugars from Java, Fiji, and other places? Yes.

5002. You were then competing with the world? Yes.

5003. And with kanaka labour? Yes. Beet sugar can, even now that the European bounties have been withdrawn, be produced for about £8 per ton, a price which would not afford more than 10s. a ton for cane.

5004. *By Mr. Nielson*: Unless you got similar assistance to what they got? Of course, I am assuming that there is no protection.

5005. Do you know that many farmers are not getting more than that now? Not in North Queensland. Of course, they have climatic conditions in Southern Queensland that we have not got here.

5006. *By the Chairman*: They have lighter crops? I doubt it. I have been from Brisbane right up, and my experience is that the average yield in Southern Queensland compares very favourably with the average yield in the North. The only thing is that it takes a little longer to grow, and that the cane, weight for weight, is not so good.

5007. *By Mr. Nielson*: They have dearer land? That may be so now, but it was not in the early days when the land was first cleared.

5008. I mean at the present time? Probably you are correct about the present time. We cannot grow cane in the North for 10s. a ton under white labour conditions. The white labourer, through his union, will demand higher pay, with the alternative of a general strike, at a time when the interruption of the harvesting will mean absolute ruin to the farmer and the millowner.

5009. You are very pessimistic? I believe in looking things straight in the face.

5010. Do you not think you are looking at them before they show their faces? I do not think so. With the experience I have had, I think I am quite justified in taking that view. There is no branch of agriculture in the world where the employer can afford to pay more than a bare living wage for field manual labour.

5011. Is anyone asking for more than that at the present time? It depends on what a living wage is. There are so many conflicting opinions about it.

5012. *By the Chairman*: What does a living wage mean to you? Not more than the wages we have been giving.

5013. What are they? About £1 a week and found. We could not afford to pay that if we had to get all our work done by white labour. I am supposed to be carrying on with coloured labour. At the same time, I am in a position to prove that of every £100 I spend £90 goes to the white labourer.

5014. Unfortunately that is not what we are trying to discover? I admit that, but I have been asked to come here and give my opinion as to the effects of the withdrawal of kanaka labour on the industry.

5015. Have you estimated what it costs to grow a ton of cane? It varies much year by year. I could not tell you at the present moment. A great deal is made of the cost of cutting and loading by white or coloured labour; but it is not only a question of harvesting. There is weeding, trashing, and all sorts of work in addition to the cutting and loading.

5016. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you trash in this district? Yes.

5017. Is it the general practice to trash? Yes, though I believe a great many do not trash, I am perfectly certain it pays to do so.

5018. It depends, of course, upon the cost? If you do not trash it makes the work of cutting much more difficult and expensive; and trashing increases the density of the juice. If you have no labour to do it, you have to leave it to the end, and make the best job you can of it.

5019. Do you think that the continuance of the bonus is necessary for the preservation of the industry? I do. It will exist so long as the bonus is given. I presume it will not be permanent, and the country will discover that it has spent £4,000,000, not to save a great industry, but to destroy it, because, without the bonus, we shall not be able to produce sugar profitably in the North.

5020. That £4,000,000 will not be lost to the country? I do not know so much about that.

5021. It will still be in Australia? Of course. That is a matter the Southern people will desire to have a very strong voice in.

5022. *By the Chairman:* Is that all you wish to say? I only want to remark that unless the white labourer can command very much better wages and conditions in the North than he can get in the South, he will be very foolish indeed to come up and settle down in the tropics.

5023. *By Mr. Nielson:* But they are commanding better wages? They are, and as long as there is a high rate of wages, or some other inducement is offered, you will have white men come for the purpose. It is only these things that will induce men to come to the tropics anywhere. So long as the industry is enabled to pay a good wage it will get the men, and will have a fair chance of being able to scrape through somehow, but we will not get the best men, as they will always remain in the South. A good man can always make a living in a country town.

5025. *By the Chairman:* Since we have been on this Commission we have had reliable information of three first-class men—three brothers—going up to the Mosman cane-cutting, and getting other work in the off season? Yes, you will get some men to go up.

5026. These are a good class of men, and I know they could have disposed of their labour in Rockhampton if they had wished to do so? You will get men to go up there for a few years, but you will not get men to settle down in the ordinary sense.

5027. *By Mr. Nielson:* Will they not settle down if they get the opportunity? I do not think so.

5028. Then why do you think they will leave the other districts? Because in the past few years things have been so bad in Australia that they have had to travel to get work.

5029. You do not think it is the difficulty of getting land that drives them North? No; it is the difficulty of getting employment.

5030. *By the Chairman:* The men I referred to were on Mount Morgan, and they could have been working there to this day if they had wished, but for some reason best known to themselves they have been led to go to the Mosman? Admitting that is correct, it only applies to a small number. We have not felt the pinch yet. When we lose the 6,000 kanakas now in the State, then the pinch will come. Where are the men to be got to replace them?

5031. It is part of our mission to try to solve that difficulty—You employ white men, I understood you to say? Certainly, I do.

5032. Do you not think that the very fact of a planter being able to pay higher wages to white men necessarily proves that white men can do more work in twenty-four hours than kanakas—that is, a good class of man? I have come across one or two good men, but in the tropics the kanaka is a better man than a white man. But if you take a white man to his own climate he is the better man of course. I have never had any labour done in the field by a white man which has approached that done with coloured labour.

JOHN CURWEN PENNY, Manager of Farleigh Plantation, examined:

5033. *By the Chairman:* What are you? Manager of Farleigh Plantation.

5034. How long have you been in that position? Two years.

5035. What experience have you had of that class of work? Since 1893.

5036. In what localities did you gain that experience? In the Isis district; and I was five years in Hawaii out of that time.

5037. *By Mr. Paget:* Engaged in sugar growing and manufacturing? Principally in manufacturing.

5038. *By the Chairman:* What labour do you employ on Farleigh? We cultivate 1,000 acres with kanaka labour.

5039. What did you cut last year? 14,000 tons of cane from about 900 acres.

5040. Have you got any statistics as to what the cutting and loading cost? No.

5041. Can you give us any estimate? We use portable trawlines, which reduce the cost of carting.

5042. What do you think it cost you per ton? The cost with coloured labour amounted to about 2s. a ton. We also had some contracting with white labour at 3s. per ton.

5043. *By Mr. Paget:* Was the latter cane registered for the bonus? No; it was all trashed.

5044. *By the Chairman:* Was it the same class of work in both cases? Yes.

5045. What was the average weight of the crop per acre? 16 or 17 tons.

5046. Is 3s. a fair price to pay for cutting and loading? Yes, on this particular land. It is level, the cane was trashed, and they had to use not more than half a mile of portable line.

5047. How many kanakas have you on the plantation? We had then about 120.

5048. *By Mr. Nielson:* What number have you got now? About eighty.

5049. When do their agreements expire? At the end of this year.

5050. *By the Chairman:* Have you commenced to make provision for labour for next year? We are leasing our lands.

5051. In what sized blocks? From 50 to 100 acres.

H. McCreehy.

17 April, 1906.

J. C. Penny.

17 April, 1906.

- J. C. Penny. 5052. On a royalty? On a royalty of 1s. a ton, with the option of purchase to white men.
 5053. How many of these people have you got? About 120 farmers on those terms.
 17 April, 1906. 5054. *By Mr. Paget*: If the farmers decide to purchase, does the royalty go towards the purchasing price? Yes.
 5055. *By the Chairman*: How long has that system been in operation? Three years.
 5056. How has it worked so far? It is working very well. We have now got a considerable number of desirable tenants on the land.
 5057. You have room for a great many more, I suppose? Yes.
 5058. Are you taking any particular action to get more tenants? We advertised once in the South, but not extensively.
 5059. *By Mr. Nielson*: What is the average price that the tenants have to pay for the land? From £2 10s. to £4 per acre.
 5060. *By Mr. Paget*: What is the area of the whole estate? 9,500 acres.
 5061. *By the Chairman*: How much of that is fit for canegrowing? I should say 6,000 acres.
 5062. Then you could increase your cultivation six times? That area of 1,000 acres is what we cultivate ourselves. The white farmers we have are in nearly all cases men without means.
 5063. And you have to finance them? Yes; almost from the start.
 5064. Still you are satisfied with the results so far? We are satisfied with a great many. Of course there are numbers of them who will not be a success; but my opinion is that, if we only had time to follow in the same direction that we are going, we would get enough white settlers to take up all the land.
 5065. All the land suitable for canegrowing? Yes.
 5066. How long do you think it would take? I should say fully ten years more, judging by the progress that has been made and the terms that have been given.
 5067. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you mean that it would take ten years more to enable you to get a sufficient number of farmers to keep your mill going? No; to get all white labour on the place and do away with coloured labour. It would take fully that long with the present bonus system.
 5068. *By Mr. Nielson*: You mean at the rate at which the planters have tried to conform to the new conditions? Yes.
 5069. *By Mr. Paget*: Or the rate at which you have tried to conform to the new conditions? Yes; I am speaking of the way in which we have been working.
 5070. *By the Chairman*: What is the smallest area you have leased? About 30 acres.
 5071. What capital would a man want to start on a farm of that area? £100 would be sufficient to give him a good start, and the mill would have to advance him money to work upon.
 5072. Would he have a fair prospect of success if he started with that capital? Yes.
 5073. Only if he were a farmer? No; I have known instances of men who have never done the work before, and still they are making a success of it—good, hard-working men. Another point I would like to mention is that our land is chiefly covered with a heavy growth of lantana. Nearly all the land that has been cleared for farmers has been cleared by black labour. We did it with our black labour and charged the cost to the farmers. It is very hard to get white men to clear lantana.
 5074. What would it cost with white labour? Anywhere from £1 to £4 per acre, according to the density of the lantana.
 5075. Was all this land originally under cane? Most of it was.
 5076. You are not troubling yourselves just now about white labour?—You are looking for white tenants? Yes.
 5077. Have you any coloured tenants? Yes.
 5078. How many? We have thirty-five kanakas.
 5079. Any Asiatics? We have six Hindoos and about a dozen Japanese.
 5080. Are those included in the 120 tenants you spoke of? Yes.
 5081. What will the position of your Pacific Island tenants be at the end of this year?—Are any of them exempt? They are not exempt.
 5082. Is the tenure for a term of years? Yes. They are under the same conditions as the other tenants—a five years' agreement.
 5083. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you make the agreements through the Inspector of Pacific Islanders? Yes.
 5084. *By the Chairman*: Then Mr. Hornbrook knows all about them? Yes.
 5085. Has he copies of them? No; I can show you the originals.
 5086. Do the tenants get copies? Yes; they are made out in duplicate.
 5087. *By Mr. Nielson*: The fact of their having agreements does not exempt them from deportation? Yes.
 5088. What will the position of a "boy" be who has worked on a farm for twelve or eighteen months—Will you pay him the value of the crop as it stands on the day he leaves? That matter has not been considered by us.
 5089. *By the Chairman*: How long is it since you made these arrangements? Some of the "boys" have been working for three years.
 5090. But the Act has been in force for four years? —
 5091. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think you had better consider the matter, and not leave it to Parliament to make a law to consider it for you, because something is bound to be done? —
 5092. *By the Chairman*: This Act was passed in 1901, and you must have known that the kanakas would have to go home at the end of 1906, and you must make some provision for dealing with them when that time comes? Yes.
 5093. *By Mr. Paget*: You are not able to bring these lessees under the Agricultural Holdings Act that was passed last year? No.
 5094. *By the Chairman*: You would not be in favour of taking advantage of these "boys"? No; we do not intend to do that.
 5095. *By Mr. Nielson*: Some of us understand that the idea of leasing those lands to kanakas was to keep kanakas here under long leases—we quite understand that—then what is his position if he happens to be sent away? —
 5096. *By the Chairman*: Mr. Smart tells us that if the "boys" have to go, he will be prepared to take their crop at a valuation; will your firm be prepared to do the same thing? We would probably put other tenants on.

5097. *By Mr. Nielson*: But if the kanaka goes away will he get any recompense for the value of the crop on his leased farm? I should say "yes."
5098. *By Mr. Paget*: Are all these South Sea Island tenants married men? Four or five are.
5100. Are they married to women of their own islands? Not in every case.
5101. Are any of them married to white women? No. One is married to an aboriginal woman.
5102. I presume Mr. Hornbrook will have particulars of those? Yes; and of the children too.
5103. *By the Chairman*: And what sort of men are they as settlers—are they sober men? Very sober.
5104. *By Mr. Paget*: Do their neighbouring tenants object to them settling on the land? No; they are very peaceable. There is no discord between them at all, so far as I know. They make very desirable tenants.
5105. You cultivate 1,000 acres by kanaka labour? Yes.
5106. Do you intend to cultivate more land next year? No; we wish to lease the cultivation.
5107. Suppose you lease the cultivated land? We have not been very successful in leasing cultivated land.
5108. *By the Chairman*: Have you had men from the northern portion of New South Wales? We have not.
5109. We heard that there were a number of men coming over here in the sugar season—I should imagine they are just the sort of men you want, and that you would keep them? —
5110. *By Mr. Paget*: It is not your firm's intention to continue cultivation on a large scale? No. We will probably not cultivate more than 200 acres.
5111. With white labour? Yes.
5112. You have taken no steps to provide yourself with the white labour necessary after this year? Only in the way of tenants.

J. C. Penny.
17 April, 1906.

ROBERT McEWEN, Farmer and Carrier, examined:

5113. *By the Chairman*: Where do you reside? At Baker's Creek.
5114. Do you grow cane? Yes.
5115. What is the area of your farm? 284 acres.
5116. How much of that is under cane? 17 acres.
5117. How much did you cut last year? 11 acres.
5118. What tonnage of cane did you get? 42 tons.
5119. How did you cut it, by black or white labour? White labour.
5120. Was it contract or day labour? Day labour.
5121. What wage did you pay? £1 a week and found all the year round.
5122. Your ordinary men cut it? Yes.
5123. How many men have you employed at the present time? Two.
5124. And you pay them £1 a week? I have increased their wages to 25s. a week this year.
5125. Are these the same men you had last year? Yes; the same men.
5126. And after an experience of some months you found they were worth more money, and you gave it? The crops increased.
5127. And you found you could afford to pay them more? Yes.
5128. You intend to continue to employ white labour? Yes.
5129. I believe you have turned your intention to inventing? Yes; that is so.
5130. Have you invented anything in connection with the cane industry? Yes.
5131. What is it? One is a canecutting machine and the other is a contrivance for dealing with the trash in the cane instead of burning it.
5132. You invented a canecutter, and a contrivance for cutting the trash up, and burying it; have you brought it to perfection? No.
5133. Did you submit that contrivance to anyone? Yes. I submitted it to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.
5134. What did they think about it? The manager here said one of the inventions was a good one, but they would not give an opinion on the other one. The manager in Sydney told me they would take no part in it, and gave me no encouragement with it.
5135. You bring it under our notice as something to help white labour with machinery, and replace coloured labour? That was not my intention when I came here. My intention was to show the difference in the price of cane and the price of labour. That is what brought me here this afternoon.
5136. *By Mr. Paget*: That is the ratio of cost between the rates for white men and black labour? Yes; the rates of labour and the prices that are offered for cane.
5137. Have you a statement? Yes; I would like to read this document from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.
5138. *By the Chairman*: It would be very interesting, but it is outside the scope of our inquiries? I do not think it is outside the scope of your inquiry. It is a contrast between the price of labour and the price of cane.
5139. All we want to know is how to substitute one form of labour for another? If I thought the scope of the Commission was confined to that only I would not have taken the trouble to come this afternoon.
5140. If you can give us any evidence about the settlement of white labour, about attracting white residents permanently to the district and putting their labour at the disposal of the growers here, we shall be pleased to have suggestions of that sort? I do not think I can add anything except that I heard some individual say that 5 acres was sufficient for an agricultural labourer to settle on. Well, I think you might as well give a man half an acre as five acres.
5141. What would you suggest as a minimum area? 50 acres.
5142. *By Mr. Paget*: As a worker's homestead, where the owner or leaseholder is supposed to go and earn his living—this is to be his home? Yes; he will give one year to us as a labourer, and the following year he will become an employer, and compete with us for labour.
5143. *By Mr. Nielson*: Where would he get the land? Well, I understand the Government have it in their power to resume this, that, and the other estate. They are doing it throughout the State.
5144. Some of the landowners in this district believe in that policy? Yes.
5145. You have 284 acres, and you only cut 17 acres of cane? Yes.

R. McEwen.
17 April, 1906.

R. McEwen. 5146. Would you give up some of your land for cultivation? I would have no hesitation in doing so. It cost me £25 an acre to clear and put a crop on it. I am awfully sorry that you cannot read this document, as I consider it comes within the scope of your inquiry, and it would go a long way towards solving the question.

PHILIP KIRWAN, Cane Farmer, Dumbleton Estate, examined :

P. Kirwan. 5147. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer on the Dumbleton Estate.
 5148. What is the acreage of your farm? 104 acres.
 17 April, 1906. 5149. How much is under cane? About 75 acres.
 5150. How much did you cut last year? About 50 acres.
 5151. For what tonnage? 750 tons.
 5152. Did you cut it with white or black labour? With white labour.
 5153. By contract? Yes.
 5154. How much a ton? Is a ton cut and loaded into a dray, and reloaded on to the trucks.
 5155. Trashed or untrashed? Untrashed.
 5156. You have done a lot of hard work yourself? I have done all that is going on the farm.
 5157. Do you consider is a ton a fair price? Yes. Evidently the men thought so too.
 5158. That is the price which the Farmers' Association has fixed for this year? Yes. Of course no rate was fixed last year.
 5159. Did you have any difficulty in getting men to do it? No.
 5160. Do you anticipate any difficulty in getting labour this year? I have a contract let for this year, so that I shall not have much difficulty.
 5161. *By Mr. Paget*: What would be about the contract price for reloading on to the trucks from the dray? The year before last it cost me 9d. a ton.
 5162. With white labour? Yes.
 5163. I presume you are registered for white labour? Yes.
 5164. What wages do you pay for ploughmen? In the crushing season I pay from 22s. 6d. to 27s. a week, and £1 a week in slack seasons for permanent hands, with no stoppage for wet days. Of course in the case of men who are working for a week or two their work stops when the wet weather comes.
 5165. You do not charge them for their keep for the days they have to knock off? No. I would not like to try that.
 5166. Have you given attention to the question of settling some of the floating labour in the locality? It would be a good thing if they would settle, but I do not think they care about it.
 5167. Would not the married men among them care to settle down? No. The big proportion are single men.
 5168. Is it not probable that they are single men because they have not been able to get a home? That is very probable, but they have no great opinion of settling down. They are quite satisfied if we give them a fair thing for doing our work. If we had work all the year round, I think they would stop with us.
 5169. Would they not stop if they had homes in the district to which they could go when they were not working for you? Yes, but it would be better if we had some industries in which they could get employment during the slack season.
 5170. Is there anything in growing sisal hemp? A fellow is a bit frightened to tackle it. You have to put out a good bit of money. There is a living in sugar, and you do not like to take any chances.
 5171. But if you gave men 50 acres? The Department of Agriculture tell us sisal hemp is a good thing, and I fancy there would be a living in it as good as wages.
 5172. Is a crop that would not require much attention? Yes. There are a few plants growing where I am, and they seem to grow without any care.
 5173. Can you give us any other suggestions which might be useful to us? If something could be done in the way of nationalising the liquor traffic, it would be a good thing. I do not want to make any charge of drunkenness against the men.
 5174. A good deal of money might be saved if less liquor was sold? Yes; and if there was only good grog sold, the men would not suffer so much from a Saturday night's spree.
 5175. Is there much trouble with the men on a Monday morning? I have had no trouble. The men always come back so long as I have work for them; but when the job is finished the publican gets all the money.
 5176. If a man had a home and some incentive to save and put his money into his own ground, would not that meet the difficulty? Yes; but it would be much better to take away the temptation that the public-house offers. I am not "barracking" for the cold-water business at all.
 5177. There will be a great many more white men required in the industry after this year—Can you offer any suggestion to the Commission as to how men can be induced to come to the sugar districts? I could not; but according to all reports there is a tremendous amount of unemployed labour in the West, and, if the conditions were made attractive enough on the coast, I think they would work for us.
 5178. Are you taking into consideration that the conditions in the West are improving every day? Even so, I think the West is hardly able to offer such permanent employment as the sugar districts.
 5179. Then it is your opinion that the Western men would come to work on the coast if they could get permanent employment? A lot of them have come here during the last few years, and they worked very well.
 5180. Does not the Western man prefer his own work of shearing and rouseabouting? I could not say. I think it is only a question of money.
 5181. Do you think there are sufficient men in the State available to supply the deficiency that will exist after the end of this year? I think so. Two years ago they had to send for 200 men from this district, and then there were plenty of men walking about through the shearing season.
 5182. We have 5,000,000 more sheep in the State now? But there are large numbers of unemployed in all the big cities who could be utilised in connection with sugar or sheep.
 5183. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you wish to say? It has been stated that some of the land on the North side could be bought for £2 or £3 an acre. I attended an auction sale in town, when £3 an acre was offered, and the auctioneer said it was not going for less than £5 an acre.

5184. What land was that? Part of the Cedars estate.
 5185. Was the land sold? Not at auction; but I believe it was taken up privately afterwards.
 5186. At something like £5 an acre? I suppose so, if they could not allow it to go for less.
 5187. Do you think a man could afford to pay £5 an acre for that land? I do not.
 5188. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know of any available Crown lands in the district? Only the land at Silent Grove, and that is too far away.
 5189. How far is it? 40 or 50 miles from here.
 5190. How far is it from the railway line? It is .5 or 6 miles from McGregor's Creek Tramway.
 5191. If it is not too far for people to come from New South Wales, and from the West, that is not too far away? You are right there; but I take it that the idea is to keep men near their work.
 5192. Do you know where to look for men now? You can pick them off the road.
 5193. Have you any knowledge of the working of the Labour Bureau? No.
 5194. You never avail yourself of it? I have never had any need to. As a rule I can get more men than I want.
 5195. You are one of the fortunate people? I think nearly every farmer in the district has been in the same position. It has been more trouble turning men away than getting them.
 5196. Do you think there will be plenty of men this year? I fancy so. There has been no scarcity so far, and I do not see why we should not have plenty this year.
 5197. Was there any scarcity of white labour last year? When I wanted men for chipping in the crushing season I had no difficulty in getting them.

P. Kirwan.
 17 April, 1906.

HENRY TONGOA, Pacific Islander, examined :

5198. *By the Chairman*: How long have you been in Queensland? Twenty-two years.
 5199. *By Mr. Nielson*: You got a ticket? No.
 5200. *By the Chairman*: Are you married? No.
 5201. Where are you working? I am a farmer growing sugar.
 5202. Where? Homebush.
 5203. What is that paper you have got? It is a Pacific Islanders' petition.
 5204. Do you want it read? I can read it myself.
 5205. *By Mr. Paget*: How many acres have you on your farm at Homebush? Fifty acres.
 5206. How many acres have you under cane? Ten acres under cane.
 5207. How long have you had that farm? Three years.
 5208. And how much do you pay? £20 a year.
 5209. Any royalty? No.
 5210. From whom do you rent that farm? From Mr. Walker, on the Broadbent road.
 5211. *By the Chairman*: How many years' lease have you got? I stop there three years, and I have another three years more.
 5212. By and by you have to go back to Tongoa, what become of land—you sell 'em? ———
 5213. You hope you no have to go back? I hope not.
 5214. *By Mr. Paget*: When you come to Queensland first you work at sugar plantation? Yes, The Palms plantation.
 5215. You wish to read that letter? Yes.

H. Tongoa.
 17 April, 1906.

Letter read as follows:—

Pacific Islanders' Association.

To the Members, Sugar Commission.

SIRS,—We ask you to leave all the "boys" who want to stop in Queensland alone. Some of the "boys" have got ground, and houses, and horses, and drays and ploughs, and plenty of other things, and they have spent all their money and a lot they have borrowed from their mates, in buying these things, and building houses and fences and doing work. Many of them are married, and have wives, and children born in Queensland, and they don't want the children to go back to islands, because they think a lot would die because the tucker and way of living at the islands are not the same as in Queensland. Also the children learn in Queensland, but do not at the islands. Some men are married to women from other islands, and it would not be safe for either to go to the other's place; and what about the children if they separate?

Plenty men came to Queensland because of trouble at home, and if they went back they would be killed, and so they are frightened to go. And plenty of men who have been away for ten years or more (some twenty, and some thirty) have been forgotten by all their people at home, and would be all the same newchums. No one would care for them if they went back; they would have to buy everything fresh, and begin all new; no one to help them, and most of their old friends dead or gone away. The white men asked us to come to this country and work for them, and the Government asked us to come, and said they would look out for us if we came, and we came and trusted to the white men, and now if he does not want us any more all right, but he should let us alone; we don't want to do him any harm, we only say don't drive us away. Plenty who don't care will go home themselves, but please don't drive away those who want to stop; you brought us here, we did not come ourselves.

We give you the names of some of our people who are married and living in Mackay, with the names of their wives, and how many children they have. You will see that some of them are married to women of different islands to themselves.

For Pacific Islanders' Association,

HENRY TONGOA, Chairman.

Mackay, 17th April, 1906.

5216. *By Mr. Nielson*: How long you been on this farm you got? Three years.
 5217. You only got 10 acres of cane? Yes.
 5218. Is the rest of the ground good for cane? Yes; it is good ground.

- H. Tongon. 5219. What are you doing with the other 40 acres? I am going to plant more cane.
 5220. You pay £20 per year for thr e years? Yes: I pay rent, and I pay rates.
 17 April, 1906. 5221. How many tons of cane did you cut last year? About 45 tons last year.
 5222. Did you pay rent last year? Yes.
 5223. How many tons you think you get this year? About the same.
 5224. What sort of crop are you going to have this year—You ought to know what it looks like now? I think I might get 100 tons this year.
 5225. How much do you get for your cane? 14s. a ton.
 5226. Have you got to cart it to the mill? We have to bring it to the line.
 5227. How many mates help you? Two "boys" work for me, and myself.
 5228. Are all these "boys" in court working? Yes; they all farmers.
 5229. Have they got leased places? Yes.
 5230. Do the "boys" think that if they lease country they will be allowed to stop here? They will stick to their lease.
 5231. Tho "boys" think because they got leases they will not have to go away? Yes; they think they got leases they be all right. You cannot make them leave the land if they take up lease.
 5232. Who told you that? They been to school, and they learn that at school. They know all about it. They know if they take up land they all right.
 5233. When these "boys" make agreement, they go and see Mr. Hornbrook every time? Yes.
 5234. When they signed agreement did they see Mr. Hornbrook? Yes.
 5235. Did Mr. Hornbrook write it? Yes.
 5246. Did Mr. Hornbrook tell you that you would not be sent away if you had leases? No.
 5237. Did the man who own the land tell you that? Yes.
 5238. You made leases so that you and other "boys" stop in Queensland? Yes.
 5239. Well, you tell the rest of your countrymen who have not got leases not to make any more on that chance? Some "boys" make a lease, and they stick to it.
 5240. Who told you that? They all know it. They all right. White men get job now, and they take up a farm to make a living.
 5241. By Mr. Paget: They do not want to walk about and loaf? No.
 5242. Why do they not go home? They want to stop in Queensland.
 The Chairman: Well, you tell "boy" not to take out any more new leases.
 5243. By Mr. Nielson: That will not make "boy" stop in Queensland—you see Mr. Hornbrook and he will tell you what is right? Yes.
 5244. Any New Hebrides "boy" here? Very few here.
 5245. By Mr. Paget: Plenty of Malayta "boy"? Yes.
 5246. By Mr. Nielson: Do they want to go home? No; they all want to stop.
 5247. By Mr. Paget: Suppose the Government speak and say you have to go back? Then what about the white men in the country belong to the "boys"? If the "boys" go back what about the white men in the islands? If the "boys" have to leave Queensland then the white men will have to leave the islands.
 5248. Would these "boys" like to go to one place in the islands and grow cocoanut altogether? I do not think so.
 5249. By Mr. Nielson: You think "boys" plenty gammon here, and say, "Suppose 'boys' sent from Queensland then white men will be sent from islands."—You think by saying that that they will allow you to stop in Queensland? If the "boys" have got to go back then the white men have to leave the islands.
 5250. There is plenty of room for you all down there? Yes; but if "boys" go now they make a row, and that no good.
 5251. That sort of talk will not frighten the Government of this country? I no want to frighten.
 5252. By Mr. Paget: That talk no good? Well, "boys" want to stop.
 5253. Are you a missionary "boy"? Yes.
 5254. Don't you think you could do a lot of good if you went home and converted some of your countrymen? I think so.
 5255. Did you understand English when you first came here? No.

JAMES TAIT, a Member of the Sugar Workers' Union, examined:

- J. Tait. 5256. By the Chairman: You are a member of the Sugar Workers' Union? Yes.
 17 April, 1906. 5257. Have you been deputed to give evidence? Yes.
 5258. I believe this is a new union? Comparatively new. It was only started last year.
 5259. What number of members has it? Between 160 and 170 at present.
 5260. You have had a conference with the Farmers' Association? There was a conference of delegates the other day.
 5261. And a mutual agreement was arrived at as to the rate of wages? A scale of rates for cane-cutting was agreed upon.
 5262. Did you hear Mr. Swayne's evidence? I heard part of it.
 5263. Was it correct? So far as I know it was.
 5264. What evidence do you wish to give us? The particular question that was discussed by the union was how a sufficient number of white labourers could be obtained to replace the islanders who are to be deported.
 5265. Do you think there is any fear of a shortage of labour? I do not think so, and the general feeling is that, if reasonable inducements are offered, there will be a sufficiency of labour.
 5266. By Mr. Paget: Inducements such as are offered by the scale of wages that has been mutually agreed upon? I think so. I am not a practical cane-cutter, but there were practical cane-cutters as delegates to meet the farmers, and they apparently think it is sufficient inducement.
 5267. By the Chairman: So far as the members of your union are concerned, they are going to adhere to the scale? So far as I know.

J. Taft.

5268. Did not the union pass a resolution that they would do so? It has not been submitted for confirmation yet.
5269. When is it likely to be submitted? I do not know when the next meeting takes place. The secretary is away in the South, and will not be back for a week or two.
5270. How can labourers be attracted to the district and induced to settle down? The Mackay Workers' Union, with which I am connected, for a number of years past have advocated workers' homes, and a scheme was submitted some years ago. The idea was that Crown lands within a reasonable distance should be divided into comparatively small areas—say, 5 acres—with the idea that the workers should establish homes on those places, and put in their spare time in cultivating them.
5271. What would you consider a reasonable distance from mills for homes of that sort? A good deal would depend upon the means of communication. Along a railway 10 or 15 miles would be nothing, but it would be too far in a part of the country where they had to ride or drive.
- 5271a. Too far for men to go backwards and forwards every day? That was not the idea.
5272. At the week end? Yes; or perhaps once a month.
5273. Are not some steps being taken by the Secretary for Lands to carry out the idea in this district? I have read in the papers that Mr. Denham has taken the matter up.
5274. With respect to two reserves? I do not know whether anything was proposed with regard to any particular piece of land.
5275. Do you know the Silent Grove land? I do not know much about the country up there, but I think it is rather far away for workers' homes.
5276. Are there any Crown lands around Mackay that could be set aside for this purpose? I am not well acquainted with the lands of the district.
5277. Do you approve of the plan? Yes.
5278. One witness said that the people whom it is desirable to get to settle down are a restless class who will not settle down—what is your opinion? A proportion of them are like that, but I think there is a better class of men coming into the district lately.
5279. *By Mr. Paget*: It is well worth while for your union to consider whether it will not be advisable to get those men to settle down, and you might endeavour to formulate some scheme? It might be worth considering.
5280. *By Mr. Paget*: The question has also arisen as to whether a system of discharge certificates might not be a good thing in connection with the sugar industry—What is your opinion about that? Well, I think it might not be a bad line.
5281. That is for references? Yes; a system of references. It has been in vogue in almost all trades here.
5282. You are aware that it is in vogue in the pastoral industry? Yes; I believe it is.
5283. Well, do you think it would be of service to have something on the same lines? Yes; it might be of service.
5284. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know anything about the Labour Bureau in this town? No; I do not know much about it. The bureau might be made useful in this connection as it is possible to do so.
5285. Can you tell why it has not been made use of hitherto? I do not know a great deal about it, but I know there are a number of men who rather distrust it, because they are inclined to think it is an institution for cutting down wages.
5286. *By Mr. Paget*: Why? I do not know. There is that feeling amongst numbers.
5287. *By Mr. Nielson*: There is no feeling without a cause? There is a certain amount of distrust about it, but I do not think it should be impossible to overcome it.
5288. Have your union not discussed this matter at all? Not in connection with the Labour Bureau.
5289. Do you not think it would be a real good subject for your union to discuss? It might be worth their while to talk about it.
5290. I presume that the union's duty does not begin and end by simply framing a scale of wages? It is only in the initiatory stage yet, and we have not had an opportunity of going into many matters.
5291. You think there is a probability that will be done? I think there is a probability that it will.
5292. I think you should, and if you tackle a question of that kind you might give us the benefit of your conclusions? Yes.
5293. I should take it that it would be better for men to go to one central place and find out whether they wanted labour than by going to the farm, and I should think it would pay the farmer better to have a central spot to go to for labour instead of looking for men along the road? It ought to be more satisfactory than the present method, when every farmer depends on men going round looking for work.
5294. You have formed a union, and the farmers have formed an association; but in order to make the Labour Bureau of any benefit there must be co-operation between the three? Yes.
5295. Now, you will discuss this matter, and give us the benefit of it by letter? Yes, I will make a note of it.
5296. *By Mr. Paget*: You said the members of your union do not anticipate any shortage of labour next year—Can you give us any idea of the number of white men who will be required next year over and above the number required this year? I cannot give you any idea, as it will largely depend on what kind of season we get.
5297. Well, take an average season, and the fact that a number of men are leaving the district? I suppose they will want as many men as there are kanakas going away.
5298. You think there will be one white man wanted for every kanaka who leaves? I should think so.
5299. We may take it that, as there are 800 or 900 kanakas in this district at the present time, then we will want 800 or 900 white men to take their places? Yes, I should imagine so.
5300. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you attempted to get the statistics of the number of men that you say are available? I have done nothing in that respect.
5301. I mean the union? The union has done nothing.
5302. Have you any means of interchanging information with the other centres? We have communication with the other unions, but they are all practically in their initiatory stages, so that there has not been much done in that respect.
5303. How long have you been living in Mackay? About twenty-three years.
5304. You ought to have some knowledge of the "boys" in Mackay? I have never come very much in contact with them.

- J. Tait.
17 April 1906.
5305. You could not live twenty-three years in this town without coming into contact with them? I have to some extent.
5306. Do you know of any "boys" in this district whom it would be a hardship to send home to their islands? I do not know any personally that it would be any particular hardship to send away. There are a few, I think, who have freeholds close to town, and it might be a little hard on them.
5307. Supposing a kanaka is married to a woman belonging to another island? I do not know of any.
5308. Have you no information of that? There is a good deal of animosity among "boys" from the different islands, and I know farmers who would only employ "boys" of certain islands, because they could not get on with the "boys" from the other islands. There is great animosity between them, and we have occasional tribal fights.
5309. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you not see that we are trying to get the opinions of people on the particular questions that we have got to solve, and one of those questions is the deportation of the kanakas? So far as I know, I do not think there are many cases in which there would be any particular hardship in returning them to their islands. They were originally brought here with the intention that they were to be returned.
5310. *By the Chairman:* The mere fact that a man has outlived his tribe you appear to consider only a detail—Some of these "boys" tell us that their friends have told them that they are complete strangers when they go back to the islands; would that be a reason why they should not be sent back? I do not know. They ought to be the best judges in that matter. I should imagine that it would not make a great deal of difference when they are going back to their own tribe.
5311. Some say that their tribes are dead? I do not know.
5312. *By Mr. Paget:* And their villages are all gone? I do not know anything about that.
5313. And the law says that the islander shall be returned to the "passage" of the island from which he was brought; would it be inhuman to deport men in that position? I do not think it would be fair to land them if all their villages were wiped out, and it would not be fair to land them against their will.
5314. Well, take the case of a Malayta "boy" married to a Santo woman, and they have children born in this country; would it be inhuman for those people to be deported to their own "passages"? It would be rather hard to do so. I do not think it would be right for the Government to return one "boy" to one place, and his wife to another place. Where would you put the children? Where do they belong to?
5315. These are the questions that we are asking you and others to give us some suggestions on? I do not think it would be a fair thing.
5316. And it might be a case for special treatment? There might be a few special cases.
5317. *By Mr. Nielson:* How is it that such a large amount of land in Mackay has been leased to kanakas? I am not aware that there is much land leased to kanakas.
5318. You heard it said this afternoon that there were thirty kanakas who leased farms? It is news to me.
5319. It was not news to me? I knew that a few kanakas had been farming, but not very many.
5320. You never heard that there were thirty? No.
5321. *By Mr. Paget:* Is there anything further that you can tell us with respect to this labour question? There is one thing I would like to mention in regard to the supply of labour. I said that the members of the union were generally of opinion that if the conditions were made attractive there would be a sufficiency of labour come along. Now, in support of that, I would like to mention that a friend of mine the other day had a letter from a friend in New Zealand. He is harvesting in New Zealand, and he casually mentioned in his letter that the men there were discussing the question of cane-cutting in Northern Queensland. That seemed to indicate that if the conditions were made attractive, and they could make a cheque out of it, they would be likely to come along.
5322. Come along and be permanent workers? Yes. These are men working in connection with the harvest there. They seem to think that there is a likelihood of their doing better at cane-cutting, and they are discussing the question, according to this gentleman's letter.
5323. Can you tell us when the wheat harvest starts in New Zealand? I do not know. I think it is going on now.

FRANCIS CHARLES HORNHOOK, Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Assistant Immigration Agent, and Officer in Charge of the Labour Bureau and Relief, examined:

- F. C. Hornbrook.
17 April, 1906.
5324. *By the Chairman:* We had a deputation of Polynesians here to-day, and they told us that they are leasing land on a five or six years' tenure—Do you know anything about it? Yes. A large number of them are doing it.
5325. It appears that the practice has only started since 1901? There were some cases before that, but they have been increasing very rapidly.
5326. *By Mr. Nielson:* Palpably, this has been done to evade the Commonwealth Act? I do not think so, because there was some of it done before the Federal Act was passed.
5327. Have you tried to discover why it is being done? There is nothing to discover. If a "boy" wants to lease a bit of land, he leases it.
5328. Do you report to the head office every time a "boy" leases land? No; because in many cases they have engaged other islanders to work for them, and those agreements go down to Brisbane.
5329. You are aware that you are here as administrator of the Pacific Islanders' Act and the law generally with regard to the islanders, and you must be cognisant of the fact that these leases contravene the law? You cannot prevent it. They can lease land quite outside of the Act.
5330. If you had notified the authorities that this was going on, steps would have been taken to prevent it? I do not know. One lease is very much like another. If a "boy" leased land ten years ago, and employed other "boys," and another "boy" does it the following year, there is not much to report that I can see.
5331. Are the "boys" under the impression that the fact of their holding those leases will prevent them being deported? Not that I am aware of. They have not said that officially.

The Chairman: Where is Henry Tongoa?

HENRY TONGOA, further examined :

- 5331A. *By Mr. Hornbrook* : Are you under the impression that you will not be deported because you have taken a lease? That is what the "boys" think. We take lease because we want to stop. H. Tongoa.
 5331B. Who told you this? No one told us; we only think it. 17 April, 1906.
Mr. Hornbrook : I never heard that before. They have an association in which they discuss these matters, but I do not know anything about it.

Examination of Mr. HORN BROOK resumed :

5332. *By the Chairman* : Do you not stand in the position of adviser to the islanders? Yes; they have to come to me. F. C. Hornbrook.
 5333. One of the "boys" says that he has a lease which will have three years to run on 31st December? A great number of them have. 17 April, 1906.
 5334. Are they to throw up the work of the last three years, and get nothing for the standing crop? Their leases are all made for three years, with the right of renewal for three years more.
 5335. *By Mr. Paget* : That is to avoid registration? Yes.
 5336. *By the Chairman* : Do you not think the "boys" should be protected from making such bad bargains as that? —
 5337. *By Mr. Nielson* : Are you aware of the terms of this "boy's" lease?
Mr. Hornbrook [to Henry Tongoa] : Who made your lease? Mr. Joseph.
 How long? Three years, and three years afterwards.

Examination of Mr. HORN BROOK resumed :

5338. *By Mr. Nielson* : He has 10 acres of cane, and is paying £20 per annum, which is more rent than any other man in the district is paying? That is an exceptional case. The rule is 1s. a ton.
 5339. *By the Chairman* : It seems that a lot of these "boys" are in a very insecure position, and that they will have to forfeit a good deal of the result of their labour on 31st December next? It is possible, of course; but that will be a matter for arrangement with the landlord. I cannot say what they will do.
 5340. We have had one landlord here to-day who says he will take the growing crop at a valuation; but Mr. Penny tells us there is no arrangement in the case of "boys" leasing land from his firm, but he believes they will do a fair thing by them—still the kanakas should not be in that position? —
 5341. *By Mr. Nielson* : Do you not peruse the leases on behalf of the "boys"? Yes; but many of them make leases quite outside of me, and, unless they come to me, I have no knowledge of them. Some people make little arrangements on a sheet of foolscap, and I may not see them for a month or two afterwards.
 5342. In the interests of the "boys," it is your duty to advise them immediately not to make leases with anybody? That may be so.

(Mackay.)

WEDNESDAY, 18 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT :

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.
 MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

JOHN LUNNY, General Worker in the Canefields, examined :

5343. *By the Chairman* : What are you? I am a general worker in the canefields.
 5344. Do you reside in Mackay? No; I am a bird of passage. J. Lunny.
 5345. Where do you come from? I came from Proserpine. 18 April, 1906.
 5346. Were you working there last season? Yes.
 5347. What were you doing? I was canecutting.
 5348. How were you paid—Were you cutting by contract or day labour? I was getting weekly wages. I was getting 30s. a week and found. That is the minimum rate in the district.
 5349. Tell us what you think it would be useful for us to know—How long were you at the work? I was fourteen weeks at the crushing.
 5350. *By Mr. Nielson* : Whom did you work for? Webster and Carsons.
 5351. *By the Chairman* : Did you work for them the whole time? Yes.
 5352. What have you got to say about the work—You found it suitable or you would not have stayed? I found the work suitable, and congenial to a white man's taste.
 5353. What months were you working there? From August till October.
 5354. And why did you continue no longer? Because the mill shut down.
 5355. In your opinion, is it work that is likely to attract men like yourself? Yes; if there is sufficient remuneration.
 5356. Do you say the remuneration is not sufficient? It is good enough in the Proserpine district, but it is not here.
 5357. You require a higher wage in Mackay than Proserpine? 30s. a week and found is the minimum rate at Proserpine, but it is the maximum rate here.
 5358. But you were satisfied to work for 30s. a week and rations at Proserpine? Yes.
 5359. Is there any difference between the climate of Proserpine and Mackay? No difference at all that I can see.
 5360. You say that the minimum rate at Mackay should be 30s. a week and found? Yes, there should be the minimum rate.
 5361. Are you a single man? Yes.

- J. Lunn. 5362. Where do you generally live in the off season—Do you generally go away? I remain in Proserpine. I have been eighteen weeks out of employment.
- 18 April, 1906. 5363. Can you not get any field work to do there? No.
5364. Are they working with black labour? No; but the farmers are lax in their duty, and they will not employ anyone at all.
5365. They will not cultivate it? No; they will not cultivate it to keep it clean.
5366. By Mr. Paget: That tells against their crop? It will eventually, but they cannot see that at present.
5367. By the Chairman: If you could have got field work up there, you would have taken it? Yes.
5368. At what wages? £1 a week and rations.
5369. By Mr. Paget: You would have taken that wage during the whole of the slack season? Yes; during the whole of the slack season.
5370. By the Chairman: You think that £1 a week and found in the slack season and 30s. a week and found in the crushing season would be a fair wage in the Proserpine district? Yes.
5371. And owing to the similarity of the climate you think the same rates should be paid here? Yes, that is the general consensus of opinion amongst the unemployed up there.
5372. And you speak for them? Yes, I am speaking for them now.
5373. We have a Farmers' Association here and also a Sugar Worker's Union, and at a conference of the two bodies it was decided that 5s. a day and found—which is 30s. a week—shall be the wage for the cane-cutters, and shall not be subject to reduction or increase? Yes, subject to the approval of the Sugar Workers' Union.
5374. By Mr. Paget: Have not those rates been confirmed yet? They have been agreed to by the delegates, but they have not been confirmed by the union.
5375. By the Chairman: The union will probably confirm them? I do not think so.
5376. Will they want more? I think they will—30s. a week and found as the minimum rate.
5377. But that is the fixed rate, and there is neither maximum nor minimum—It is to be neither reduced nor increased? Yes; I saw that.
5378. The employers undertake not to reduce the rate, and it is to be hoped the sugar-workers will agree not to ask to have it increased, and these rates will become the established rates? The understanding is to conform to existing circumstances. The employers have made no advances at all. They might just as well not have met.
5379. That is not what I gathered from the evidence yesterday—I gathered that there was only a formal confirmation necessary? It has not been confirmed yet.
5380. By Mr. Paget: Have you worked longer than one season in the canefields? Yes, three years.
5381. What was your occupation before that? Shearing.
5382. You were a Western man? Yes, or rather I am a Victorian native.
5383. Is it your intention, provided the rates of wages are what you approve of, to continue working in the canefields? Yes, provided there is sufficient inducement and remuneration.
5384. By the Chairman: Are you a member of any union yourself? No.
5385. As a man of experience you would strongly recommend the union to accept those rates? No, not those rates. If there is a minimum rate struck the same as elsewhere, I would support it.
5386. But is it not just the same if there is an undertaking on either side that the rates are not to be altered? No; a man has the same old order of supply and demand that exists in the country now. Let the supply and demand fix the maximum. That is what it will have to be.
5387. Well, then it should cut both ways, and you would not like to see that—Why not let the law of supply and demand fix the minimum? No; we are supposed to have outlived the instincts of horses and beasts, and we want to go by the evolution of circumstances.
5388. By Mr. Paget: Of late years there have been a number of Western men working in the canefields? Yes.
5389. Can you tell us of your own knowledge, in the face of the improved conditions in the West, whether the Western men would prefer to go back to their employment of shearing and general shed work, or stop on the coast? They would sooner stay on the coast.
5390. We have gathered in the last fortnight that the Western men would prefer their own work in the West if it was there? Yes; but it is not there.
5391. The conditions are improving in the West? But six months' work here is equal to ten months' work out there.
5392. Do the men not go from shed to shed out West? Yes, when there is plenty to do, but the number of sheep is one-third below the normal carrying capacity of the State.
5393. But the conditions are very much improving in the West, and the sheep increasing in numbers, and the sugar industry will still require a large number of men—If, therefore, men working in the West return to their employment, will there be sufficient men throughout the State to fill the gap there will be in the sugar industry? There will be sufficient for national necessities.
- 5393A. I do not follow you? There will not be sufficient for commercial tangles and commercial impositions.
- 5393B. By the Chairman: You have been shearing in the Western country in Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland—how does the cane-cutting work compare with shearing? Cane-cutting is a lot healthier than shearing.
5395. Is it harder than shearing? No; no not half as hard.
5396. Did you ever do any tanksinking? Yes. I have pioneered the country as an industrialist.
5397. Is cane-cutting worse than tanksinking? No; there is no comparison between them.
5398. What hours do you work at tanksinking? Eight hours.
5399. What hours do you work at cane-cutting? Nine or nine and a-half.
5400. Have you anything more to say to us? From conversations I have had as I came along with different islanders I learned that their reasons for wanting to go home are: False statements about vessel; they are not kept in touch with the vessels going home; exploiting "boys," wanting them to sign on again; not sufficient money to pay their passage; suspicion of guilt centred too much on them in cases of outrage, rape, and murder.
5401. They object to being under suspicion? Yes; they object to the country on that account. Then they are sensitive about working under white men's rates. More natural conditions prevail in their own country and among their own sweethearts; the tendency to kill the fatted calf on the prodigal's return.

5402. *By Mr. Paget:* Can you give us any idea as to the number of men who will be available after this year for the sugar industry? That will depend on the bounty and the land that will fall out of crop. There are any amount of men who will go in for dairying.

J. Lunny.

18 April, 1906.

5403. Then you expect there will not be so much cane grown after this year? I am not in a position to say.

ROWLAND MARTIN SHANNON, Cane Farmer, examined:

5404. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A canegrower.

5405. Where is your holding? On the Pioneer River, 1½ miles up, near Pleystowe mill.

5406. What is the area of your holding? 500 acres.

5407. How much is under cane? About 130 acres.

5408. How much did you cut last year? About 1,500 tons. I cut an average of about 1,500 tons every year.

5409. Did you cut it by white or black labour? By white labour.

5410. By contract or by day labour? Last year by contract. I usually cut by day labour.

5411. What price did you pay? 4s. a ton right through.

5412. Was it untrashed cane? All the ratoons were trashed. The plant cane was untrashed.

5413. Was it loaded into drays? The 4s. was for complete harvesting and loading on to portable trambles.

5414. Did you have travelling or local labour? One man came from the sapphire fields, two from the Richmond River, two were fossickers from Clermont, and the other man came from South Africa.

5415. How did they shape? They were a splendid lot. There was never a hitch of any kind.

5416. What months were you cutting? From August until November.

5417. Did they complain of the heat? No. The only complaint was that the mill would not let them send in enough cane. We had to throw one man out of the gang half-way through, as there were too many men for the allotment.

5418. Did you ever hear what they made? They cleared about £2 5s. a week, after paying for everything, although they were not working full time. Towards the end they were losing about two hours a day.

5419. *By Mr. Paget:* How did they manage about their rations? They had to ration themselves; but I guaranteed all their accounts, so that they could get goods at a fair rate.

5420. How did they manage about the cooking? They were too mean to hire a cook, and they did their own cooking. That was the only unsatisfactory part of it; but that was their own lookout. I provided them with quarters, a kitchen, and a dining-room. A baker comes round every other day, and they had their rations supplied by him. The men took it in turn to look after the cooking.

5421. *By the Chairman:* I suppose you expect those men will come back again? Some of them are farming. One is in New Zealand, and two are on the Burdekin. They have written to me.

5422. Would it not be an advantage if you could secure men like that in the district, so that you could have them year after year? I have never had any difficulty with strange hands. I would just as soon have them.

5423. *By Mr. Paget:* How do you manage about labour in the off season? I find there are plenty of men who work willingly. I never have any trouble with them.

5424. Do you pay them by wages? Yes; weekly wages. I do not believe in contract work for cultivating. I pay them 25s. a week and found, and I give 30s. a week and found to the head ploughman.

5425. *By the Chairman:* Did you ever do any work yourself? Yes; I have done my fair share of it. I have had twelve years of it.

5426. And it has not killed you yet? No; I am not dead yet.

5427. It is work that a man can do? If you are careful of yourself and moderately temperate and treat yourself moderately well, it is about the most healthy work you can follow.

5428. And you were not brought up to manual work? No; I was not brought up to heavy work.

5429. And still you can do it? Yes.

5430. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know the prices that have been fixed for contract work in this district? Yes.

5431. Do you think that these are reasonable prices? Well, they are not excessively high.

5432. Do you think that they are prices that the average farmer can afford in this district? Yes, they are.

5433. It has been stated that they are going to be looked upon as a maximum rate; do you think that is so, or will they be looked upon as a standard rate? I should think they will be looked upon as a standard rate. I should think the farmers would not pay lower wages than that if they want decent men to come into the district.

5434. Do you think that these prices will be reduced by your association if there is a surplus of labour? I cannot answer for the association. There is absolutely no doubt, so far as the farmers are concerned, they could not pay less than that. It would not pay them to do it.

5435. *By the Chairman:* Good men will not work for less than that? No; and it is not fair to ask them to do it.

5436. *By Mr. Nielson:* Can a good man earn a decent wage at these prices with the average crop which you are cutting? Undoubtedly so.

5437. *By the Chairman:* What did your crop average last year? Mine went 22 tons to the acre right through. Some went over that, and some under, but that would be about the average.

5438. And a man can earn a good cheque with a tonnage like that? Easily.

5439. *By Mr. Paget:* And it is good country to cut on? Yes; mine is good country to cut on.

5440. You have been growing cane by white labour for some years? I began to employ white labour in 1901, the year before the rebate was granted.

5441. Do you consider it necessary that there should be a continuance of the present bounty system in order to enable you to pay such wages? I think, if we are going to pay decent wages, we should have a decent price for our cane. Whether it is by bounty or not is not very important.

5442. Well, instead of bounty I shall say protection? It is absolutely necessary we should get 19s. per ton for the cane.

R. M.
Shannon.

18 April, 1906.

R. M.
Shannon.
18 April, 1906.

5143. Which is practically the price you are getting now with the bounty? Yes; everything is based on the present price we are getting from the cane, and on the average I do not think we can go under that and make a living. This district has special conditions. It is a very weed district, more so than others, and more work is required.

5144. *By the Chairman:* What do you pay your hands all the year round for ordinary cultivation? 2s. a week for the men, and 5s. extra to the head ploughman.

5145. Can you offer any suggestion as to the best means of inducing men to settle on the land here that their labour might always be available? Yes; I should like to speak on that garden area proposal.

5146. You mean a homestead area of some sort? Undoubtedly there are exceptional cases in which the men would avail themselves of them. They would be given to married men who would bring their families here. We would then have a young population coming on. The majority of the men here resent that kind of thing, so far as I can make out. They look on it as something in the nature of wet-nursing, and they do not care for it. I am speaking of the nomads. They are a good class of workers, and are honest and trustworthy, but they just drift about from one place to another, and do not want to stay anywhere for any length of time, and when they are out of work they clear out.

5147. Is that nomadic life a habit that they become accustomed to? Yes. The garden areas would be no good for that kind of men. There are other men who would like to settle down with their families and it would be a good thing for them. The other class of men only want good wages and do not care a penny about garden allotments. If they were given allotments they would not know what to do with them.

5148. They are single men that you refer to? Yes; they are mostly unmarried men.

5149. The man in my mind is the young man growing up who wishes to settle down and have a wife? The ambition of a man like that would be to become a farmer, and a farmer would not work on 5 acres.

5150. Well, 60 acres has been suggested? Well, if you give him that he will take himself off the labour market. He will no longer be a wage-earner, as he will become independent to some extent.

5151. But there would be five or six months in the year when his labour would be available to the employer? Not always. They can put all their time in at their own homes, as they must do better in their own homes than working for wages.

5152. You think that, on the whole, the idea of a homestead settlement would not find favour? No; not on the whole. It is not a good thing for it to be given too much prominence. It is causing some resentment. The men think they are able to do their work and earn their wages, and they do not want anybody to wet-nurse them.

5153. *By Mr. Paget:* Was this scheme not first thought out by the Mackay Worker's Union? Yes; it is an old scheme, but it has never been a popular one amongst the workers. There are some married men who would like to have something of the kind, and they would fall in with the idea sufficiently to make it a success, but there would not be any great development by the others so far as I can see.

5154. There seems to be a feeling in favour of it in other districts that we have visited? Yes; amongst the married men who have small families living in town or in Mirani and Walkerston. These men would like to have some place where they can leave their families in the crushing season, and where they can do a little for themselves in the off season, but the general mass do not care twopence for it.

5155. *By the Chairman:* Is there any other subject on which you think you can give us some information? I would certainly like to speak on the question of the organisation of the labour market. I mean that men coming into this district have great difficulty in finding work. There is absolutely no means of getting reliable information.

5156. Is there any labour bureau here? Yes, I believe there is; but there is not one man in fifty who knows anything about it. I am speaking now of the Government Labour Bureau. Then there is another thing: There is a feeling amongst the men that to go down to this bureau and be registered is a degradation—that they are classed amongst the unemployed—I mean unemployed in the loafing sense—and they do not care for it.

5157. But surely they would not hesitate about going to an ordinary registry office? No; they would not hesitate there.

5158. What is the difference? Usually a man who goes to the Labour Bureau gets rations on account—an indigent allowance.

5159. And you think the indigent relief should be kept apart from the registration of labour? Most decidedly.

5160. In some cases they are divided? In this district we have telephones to practically all the mills, and if there were well-organised offices in Mackay the men seeking information could get it from the mills from day to day.

5161. The officer in charge could telephone to the various mills from day to day letting them know what labour he had registered, and what applications he had for labour? The telephone is available to all the mills. Even now one mill officer makes inquiries every day to see how we are getting on with our cane. We must keep the mill moving at a proper rate. The officer, by ringing up, can find out how they are situated for supply.

5162. But if a man refuses to register here, he would not assist the thing very much? I do not think a man would refuse to register if the bureau were put on a different footing. When it became a practical one would be a very satisfactory practice to my idea, because at present men have to walk all over the district looking for work. These are only a nuisance to the farmer, because when he is at work it is a nuisance to have to come up half a dozen times to see someone. If it is men asking for work it is very annoying for the farmer—and he has to be civil—and it is pretty hard on the worker to be refused work. It must be very disheartening to the worker to be continually refused work in that way. It would be much better for the farmer to be able to put his hand on the worker when he wants him.

5163. You think if relief were not issued from the Labour Bureau it would do away with a great deal of the objection on the part of the men? It would do away with a great deal of it. You would want an officer who is in sympathy with the men.

5164. To do the work he is paid to do? Yes; and to do it thoroughly.

5165. Is there anything else that would be of use to us? I have found that the wages work pays both the farmers and the men the best. A man has more responsibility, and he has more control over his men than if he employs a contractor. In a gang of more than four or five there is a lot of friction, particularly over the cooking arrangements. That can be got over if you look after the cooking yourself.

5466. Have you formed any opinion as to whether it is better for a contractor to take the whole risk and pay his labour, or for the men to share and share alike? There is no comparison between the two systems. The co-operative is the only one possible. Under the other system, the work is scamped, and men are continually leaving. Under ordinary circumstances I do not think we shall have any difficulty about the labour supply for this year. Of course there is a large number of new areas registered this year that have not been worked with white labour hitherto, consequently there will be an increased demand. Whether the labour is here or not I could not say, but I am inclined to think it is not here yet. I have seven men now and I shall require nine for the crushing season, so that, even if no more white men come into the district, I can still get through with my off-season hands and myself. I think most of the other old employers of white labour are pretty well in the same position. If there is to be a shortage, it will be felt by the newly registered growers.

R. M.
Stannion
18 April, 1906

5467. You can manage by doing more autumn planting? Yes; it is only fair to try and keep good men in the district all the year round. There is a good deal of work that we used to put off until the crushing season, and now we do it in the off season.

5468. On the other hand, the previous witness said that the farmers in another district are not doing that? That is not fair, because you cannot expect men to wait six or seven months for a six weeks' or two months' job. I have some men in from the sapphire fields, and they say there a lot of men who will come in from there if sufficient inducement offers. Every year prospectors from Clermont come here for the crushing to make a little cheque, and then go out fossicking again.

5469. Do the men you spoke of as coming from the sapphire fields come from Anakie? Yes. They were some of the original wheat-growing settlement at Emerald.

FRANCIS CHARLES HORN BROOK, Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Assistant Immigration Agent, and Officer in Charge of the Labour Bureau and Relief, farther examined:

F. C.
Hornbrook.
18 April, 1906.

5470. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of the district under your control as Inspector of Pacific Islanders? It extends about 60 miles north and south and about 40 miles east and west.

5471. What is the approximate number of islanders in the district? There are 955 adults and 64 children.

5472. Do you know how many of these islanders' agreements have expired, or whether they are all time-expired "boys"? About 170 agreements of old hands will expire between this and 31st December, and those of 63 new chums.

5473. Will many expire about June? There are not many expiring about 30th June, but on 13th July there will be 63 engagement "boys" and 28 or 29 indentured islanders' agreements expiring.

5474. Do the numbers you gave us—958—include the "boys" who are at present out of employment? It includes them all.

5475. How many unemployed "boys" are there? There cannot be more than thirty or forty.

5476. Will the return you are preparing for the Commission give all the particulars regarding those "boys"? Yes.

5477. Will it also indicate those who are farmers? I will include them.

5478. Will it also show those who are storekeepers? There are two or three boarding-house keepers.

5479. *By Mr. Nielson:* We want to know any who are leaseholders? So far as I know, there are forty-seven holding farms. Of course a "boy" can take up a farm, and I may not hear of it for a little time. On those forty-seven farms there are ninety-six "boys" working.

5480. *By the Chairman:* How are those farms held? On lease.

5481. What kind of lease? In all cases that have come under my notice I have told the "boys" to get a lease drawn up by a lawyer, so that they will have security of tenure.

5482. What will be their security of tenure on 31st December? Sometimes they merely have a paper to this effect:—"I have leased to Tommy Santo 10 acres for so much." When a "boy" comes and tells me that he wishes to do this, or that he has done it, I tell him that he ought to have a proper agreement or lease, otherwise my view is that he will be working illegally on the ground, and he ought not to be allowed to do that. If I went out into the bush and saw a "boy" working on a place, I would tell him that, if he had no agreement, he had no business there. There is nothing to prevent a person who has him there scribbling on a piece of paper, "I have leased Tommy Tanna 14 acres of ground"; but I wish to know whether there is a *bona fide* agreement.

5483. But you have not considered it a part of your duty to guard the islanders against making such agreements? You cannot prevent them. You can tell them the position, but it rests with them whether they do it or not. There is no law to prevent it.

5484. *By Mr. Nielson:* How long have you been in charge of the islanders here? Eighteen or nineteen years.

5485. Do you mean to tell me that you have absolutely lost control or influence over them? Oh dear no! 5486. Do you not think that if you advised a "boy" not to take a lease he would not do it? You may advise a "boy", but he may not follow your advice.

5487. Then you have lost control and influence over them? That does not follow. A person may have influence over another, and he may listen to advice, but he may not follow it.

5488. Did you see the agreements with the thirty-five "boys" on Farleigh? I have seen them, but probably I have not read the whole lot. It is a printed form drawn up in Bundaberg by the firm.

5489. Did you advise any of those "boys" not to take on those farms? I told them the risk they ran when they came to me. I asked them, "If you do this, what are you going to do by and by when you go home?" and they said, "Suppose me go home, we no want it." Then I would say, "I think you had better get wages." "Oh, no! me try it." "All right," I would say.

5490. *By the Chairman:* And in your opinion the "boys" all understood that? Undoubtedly they did.

5491. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you not think it was your duty to see that there was a clause in the lease to compensate them? I could not interfere with them. If a man enters into a lease, he has to take it with the terms which the landlord allows him.

5492. You do not think it is part of your duty to see that such a clause is inserted in these leases? No. 5493. If it was your duty, it would be better for the "boys"?

5494. Did you see the agreements that Mr. Smart made with his "boys"? I saw copies.

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5495. Did you notice any difference in the wording of the agreement which Mr. Smart made, and the agreements made in connection with the Farleigh mill? Yes, the agreement made with the Farleigh mill was stiffer.

5496. Do you know that according to Mr. Smart's agreement, a "boy" will be compensated if he is deported while he is a tenant of his? It was not in the agreement that I saw.

Mr. Nielson: Mr. Smart said that he said to the "boys" that he would not take advantage of them, and if they had to go away he would see them through with it.

5497. By the Chairman: That was not embodied in the lease you saw? No.

5498. By Mr. Nielson: Was it not your duty to see that it was there? No.

5498a. I suppose you think your duty ends when the "boy" is out of a job? The "boy" and the landlord are quite apart from me when they make an agreement about a piece of land. They may come to me when they enter into an agreement, and sometimes they may not come to me at all. One "boy" did come to me with an agreement, and I said to him, "What are you going to do with this when you go away. Don't you think you will lose 'em?" and the "boy" said to me, "I think 'em all right, and me take him."

5499. Did he know he was liable to be deported? Every "boy" in the district knows that he is liable to go away at the end of the year.

5500. Did you explain to the "boy" that he would get nothing if the landlord did not choose to give him anything? I believe I told him he was foolish to enter into such an agreement, but I cannot say.

5501. Do you not think it was your duty to explain the terms of the agreement to the "boy"? He signed a certificate to the effect that he understood it.

5502. Why did you not explain to the "boy" that he would not get any compensation? I was not the justice of the peace.

5503. Is it not your duty to see these leases on behalf of the "boys"? Not at all. If they make a lease and show it to me it is all right, but there were plenty of leases entered into last year that I never saw.

5504. It does not say much for your administration? A "boy" may be making an agreement at present for all I know.

5505. Would they effect their own leases? Yes, they do. There are men who have been thirty years in the place doing it, and they tell me about it afterwards.

5506. You did not think it was your duty to report to the head office that the kanakas were extensively leasing land in this district? I did not make any report, but they knew it at the head office, as I sent the agreements down.

5507. And did you make a special report? No.

5508. What agreements went down? When these "boys" employed other "boys" the agreements were sent down.

5509. In all cases they did not employ "boys"? No; but a great many of them did.

5510. In most cases where other "boys" were employed these others would work as mates? Not in all cases.

5511. But in some cases they did so? They are not all alike.

5512. You did not think it was your duty to draw special attention to them? No; certainly not. They are doing the same thing in other districts. It obtains all throughout the State.

5513. Have you no regulations defining your duties? There are regulations under the Act.

5514. Do you get any instructions by letter from your head office? At times.

5515. When they find out? If I want to know anything, or they think it necessary letters should be sent out, I will get one.

5516. Are there no regulations? No, only what is in that pamphlet.

5517. Will you be good enough to report immediately to headquarters the extent to which the islanders have leased land in this district? I think they knew that by wire a week ago. They asked the question.

5518. You did it then? Yes.

5519. And you got all the statistics? Yes.

5520. With regard to the additional passage-money, has anything been done to recover it from the last employer? Action is being taken, and I think it will be before the court within the next few days, but I cannot say yet.

5521. Are there any "boys" in Mackay waiting to go home? Yes, six or eight.

5522. Do you know how many "boys" there are in the Mackay district who have been prevented from going home because they did not have the additional money to pay for their passage? Very few.

5523. Do you know of any? I heard the "boys" say so, but only after the instructions came up about making their employers pay. They did not say so before those instructions were issued.

5524. By the Chairman: Do you know of any who are waiting about now? None of them want to pay now.

5525. By Mr. Nielson: Do you not think that is quite natural? If a man can get out of making any payment it is quite natural for him to do so.

5526. But do you think these "boys" should pay? I always do as I am told, but I have my own opinion about it. What the legal aspect is is not for me to say; but the practice was made outside of that, and it lasted for fifteen or twenty years, and this rather led people to believe that the "boy" should pay.

5527. It rather made people get the impression that there was no Act at all? I cannot say that; but it was the practice adopted by various Ministers.

5528. By the Chairman: But since the 13th of March last the employers have known that the last employer had to pay the extra return passage? They have all been notified, and if a "boy" wants to go home now we send to his last employer. If the vessel is in Bundaberg there is a difference in the amount of the passage to be paid, so we cannot make any regular deduction. We have to find what the vessel is, what the fare will be, and then we ask the employer for it. There is also another trouble. If we have over a certain number to send down, the shipping companies make a reduction, but I do not know until I have got the complete tally how many "boys" I am going to get.

5529. Would it not be the safest to find out how many are going? We will have to do that. Until we know where the ship is lying and the number we are likely to get away, we are uncertain.

5530. The safest way would be to collect the £2 and the passage by the vessel to the nearest port? Yes; that is what we are doing now.

5531. You remember the case of a "boy" who came to Bundaberg the other day? Yes; a dozen went down.

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5532. But regarding one or two you received certain instructions? There were four.
5533. Did you receive special instructions about those "boys"? No.
5534. *By Mr. Paget:* Did you not receive special instructions from the head office? No.
5535. *By the Chairman:* Have you received an assignment from those "boys" to you? No; not yet. I have heard nothing further about it.
5537. *By Mr. Nielson:* Did you receive definite instructions to prosecute? Yes; I had definite instructions, because one employer definitely refused to pay the extra passage-money. I sent to Brisbane and asked for instructions concerning it, and I was told to prosecute, and to employ a certain firm of solicitors. I could not get that particular firm, and I wired, asking for further instructions, and asking if I could engage another firm, but I have not yet had any reply.
5538. When did you send that wire? Yesterday. I was out at Farleigh on Thursday, and the holidays intervened.
5539. How many cases have you pending in which claims are being made for additional passage-money? Six.
5540. Are those the only cases you have had within the last month? That is all I have. There are five, six, or seven, or thereabouts.
5541. You recollect those particular "boys" who went to Bundaberg? Yes.
5542. Did you make a demand on their employers for their passage money? Yes; before they went away.
5543. *By the Chairman:* Did the employers refuse to pay? No; but I wrote to them and they did not reply. Two of the "boys" came in only a day or two before the vessel sailed, and they wanted to go at once. The employers were immediately written to, but there is no possibility of getting a reply from them.
5544. There has been plenty of time since for a reply? Yes; but they did not reply. With regard to the man and his wife who went to Bundaberg, his agreement was broken in January last to allow his employer to comply with the white labour regulations. The instructions concerning those "boys" were that they were to be entitled to six months' pay as compensation; but one of the "boys" was paid too much in error. I asked the employer about it, and he said he paid one "boy" off, and lost £2 by the transaction.
5545. Then these "boys" have been paid? Two of them have been paid. The other two were not paid. I wrote asking for payment, but my letters were not answered.
5546. *By Mr. Paget:* Mr. Rannie's telegram said the islander was recompensed by being paid £10? That is the case I refer to. And really the "boys" were £2 better off.
5547. And the employer was not liable for the passage money of the children to Bundaberg? He was not. Those "boys" made £2 on the transaction.
5548. *By Mr. Nielson:* One of the "boys," who is a Malayta "boy," said there were 100 Solomon Islanders out of employment in the Mackay district? There are nothing like that number.
5549. Probably some of them have become tenants since then? There has not been any lease made in the last fortnight, that I am aware of.
5550. *By Mr. Paget:* One of the islanders also said that he worked for a farmer about 100 miles from town—is that true? I do not know of any more than 35 or 40 miles away. Their ideas of numbers and distances are very vague.
5551. *By the Chairman:* You have been several trips as a Government agent? Yes. I was at it for seven years.
5552. How long is it since you were down at the islands? It must be nineteen years now.
5553. The conditions are greatly altered since then? They are quite different. They were wild in those days; now they are comparatively civilised.
5554. Do you think there is any risk of starvation in the case of the Solomon "boys" who have to be deported? If any large number of islanders were suddenly landed at any one of the islands, there would be a scarcity of food. If there was a hurricane, which affected only a portion of an island, the people there were practically starving. It was a common practice for ships, when they heard of anything of that sort, to go there, knowing there was a good prospect of their getting some of the people to come to Queensland, as they had nothing at all to eat. If that upset them, the landing of a large number of "boys" in one district is bound to have the same effect.
5555. Would that apply to both the New Hebrides and the Solomons? I think it would apply to either group. We used to buy as much native food as we could get, but at times we could get hardly any at all, although we gave fairly good prices. When they used to be allowed to give guns I have seen a man offer a musket and 2 or 3 lb. of powder and shot and some tobacco for a boatload of yams, which would be equivalent to something like £100 a ton for potatoes. It would be something very big. They rarely planted more than they could use themselves, because they were always at war. Many a time I have seen them without yams at all, simply living on coconuts and fish.
5556. Do you know Captain Reynolds? Very well. I have sailed with him.
5557. I presume we may rely upon the information he gave as absolutely reliable? I should think so. He is a straight, honest man, and has had a great deal of experience. I should say he is as well acquainted with the islands as any person. He has been going there regularly, and must know what is going on.
5558. What have you to say about the advisableness of landing a "boy" and his wife in the event of their belonging to different passages? I have seen that sort of thing before. If the man was landed at the woman's passage his life would be in danger, and if the woman was landed at the man's passage she would be ill-treated by the other women and made a slave of.
5559. The trouble, I suppose, would be accentuated if the woman was white? It would be quite out of the question.
5560. As regards malaria, we have been told that children born in Queensland are peculiarly susceptible to its influence? I have not the slightest doubt of it. When I was Government agent I used to find many of the "boys" who had returned the trip before suffering from fever, and being fond of doctoring I used to physic them. Their children who had been born in Queensland I found had much the same constitution as white children born in Queensland who might go there. Another thing that troubles them is the change in food. The native food that they get down at the islands is quite different from the food they were accustomed to in Queensland, and they really could not stand it.

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5561. Would it be safe to send the islanders down in the hurricane season? It would be very risky sending them before the middle of April.
5562. From April to the end of the year there would be a good supply of food? Probably. If it is proposed to send a large number of "boys" to any place, the best idea would be to have a quantity of food planted during the next planting season in order to have a large supply on hand when they arrive.
5563. How would you suggest that should be done? It could only be done by the Government agents or captains of vessels finding out where the bulk of the "boys" were likely to be landed, and then, for a quantity of tobacco or something of that sort to be distributed, to secure a considerable extra planting.
5564. With whom would they have to treat? With the chiefs.
5565. When they got the tobacco would they be sure to plant? I think so; especially when they knew it was for their own people. Of course, it would be very much in the nature of an experiment. Still, it would be better to find out what food there was before sending any large number of "boys."
5566. *By Mr. Paget*: The season for planting yams is about September? Yes; in the later months of the year.
5567. *By the Chairman*: In how many parts of Malayta would you suggest attempts should be made to plant? I should plant at Alite Bay. There are a great many "boys" come from that neighbourhood.
5568. By carefully going through the agreements it would be possible to compute the number of islanders belonging to each district? When my list is made out, I shall be able to tell you to within one or two.
5569. Will it be possible to make arrangements such as you suggest with the chiefs? I think it can be done in many cases.
5570. Captain Reynolds's opinion on that would be of value? Yes. I do not know that the chiefs have the same authority that they used to have. Probably intercourse with the whites may have lessened it, but when I was down there the word of the chief was law.
5571. Can you suggest anything else in that direction? That is the only way I thought of getting over the food difficulty.
5572. Would it be any good sending food down to the islands? I do not think it would, because it might lead to disputes. It would be a sort of relief business on a large scale; and, from my experience of it here, it would be anything but satisfactory.
5573. One witness told us that it would lead to a free fight? I think it would. It would need storing, and they have no places fit to store anything in.
5574. *By Mr. Paget*: It is probable the bushmen would come down and fight with the salt-water men over it? Yes. I do not think it would be advisable to store food there.
5575. *By the Chairman*: Yaw-growing is chiefly carried on by the hill tribes? Chiefly on the slopes of the mountains. The salt-water men grow a little, but, as a rule, they devote their time to fishing, and exchange fish for the other men's yams.
5576. Would it be advisable to send a Government agent down to arrange for such a planting of yams? I should not like to be the Government agent. You might make an arrangement with two or three of the chiefs. I do not say it would be an unqualified success, but it would help.
5577. In the event of its proving a failure, it would be worse than nothing at all? Before sending any large number of "boys" home, it would be absolutely necessary to ascertain what food there was and whether it could be obtained from any other source.
5578. That was my idea in suggesting the Government agent—You think he would not live to tell the tale? He would require protection. If he went with ten or a dozen men into the bush he would be perfectly safe; but if he went alone he would probably get a crack on the head when he was not looking. I have been on most of the islands. I used to have a fancy for wandering about, and I came out all right as luck would have it; but it does not follow that, if I had tried it again, I would not have come to grief.
5579. Have you ever been to Malayta? Several times.
5580. Do you know a place called Iru? Yes; it is a black, sandy beach on a big river. I have lively recollections of the place. There is a swamp behind it.
5581. Is it an unhealthy place for a settlement? There may be hills on the side of it. I should not think anyone would like to live on the low ground, though they might live on the hills on either side.
5582. *By Mr. Nielson*: Your remarks about the food supply refer only to the Solomons, I presume? They refer to the other group. In fact, it would be more easily done in the New Hebrides than in the Solomons. From what I understood from Captain Rason, when he was here two or three years ago, I do not think a system of depôts would work, but, I think that through him, if not through the Government agents, something might be done in that way on islands where there are large numbers of people. Aoba would be a very dangerous island to send a large number of people. I take it the food supply there is never very large. It is a mountain of almost solid rock. The crops are not so good as in the neighbouring islands, and to send people there would mean starvation. Santo, Malicolo, and other islands not far away are not so thickly populated, and are larger and more fertile, and some arrangement might be made there.
5583. You think it would be dangerous to send a New Hebrides man and a Malayta woman to the New Hebrides? I would not like to risk it.
5584. Well, suppose Captain Reynolds told us that they would be as safe there as they are in Queensland? Well he would know better than I. It is seventeen or eighteen years since I was there, but I would not like to take the risk of sending them, knowing what happened when I was there. The people who have been there since then, however, know more about it than I do.
5585. You have not heard if there is any employment for the "boys" when they go home to their islands? The only thing that I heard was when Captain Rason was here, and he had the notion of keeping them together to cultivate different things on some island.
5586. A lot of people on the islands have similar notions, and are waiting for the "boys" to come back? I did not hear of any.
5587. Have you not heard of Lever Brothers, of Sunlight Soap fame? No.
5588. Have you heard of Captain Svenson? Yes, he was there in my time.
5589. *By Mr. Paget*: What was he doing? He had a little schooner which he used in trading. He was engaged in copra-buying. There were others that I knew there, such as Proctor and Macdonald and others, but they are all dead.

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5590. *By the Chairman:* Swenson is not dead? I heard he has taken a place on Guadalcaur. There was only one place, at Uji, where I saw any cultivation. A man called Steele was growing cocoa there. He got some seeds, and the trees were laden. That was the only cultivation there was on the Solomons when I was there. In the New Hebrides there were a few copra traders.

5591. *By Mr. Nielson:* You did not hear recently of the sale of a big plantation there for £20,000? No.

5592. Do you know anyone in Queensland who owns land in the Solomons? I know some of them.

5593. I know some men in Bundaberg who have owned land there? I was nearly buying land in the New Hebrides myself.

5594. *By Mr. Paget:* Can you give us any information as to the best methods of deporting this large number of islanders at the end of the year? I have thought of several ways; but there appear to me to be only two. One would be to do it very quickly by steamers, so that they would not have to remain any length of time in the country.

5595. Have you thought of the food supply? Of course. Say they are to be expelled on the 31st December, well, every day after that that those 6,000 "boys" are kept in the State means a great deal of money, and somebody will have to support them. That will run into £30,000 so far as I can see.

5596. I was thinking of the food supply on the islands if you deported them in large numbers? I say that there will certainly be a shortage down there unless some arrangement is made to meet it, but the yam-growing will help it. If you send them away in large numbers, I take it that on any island in the groups you can put 1,000 men without being in great danger of being short of food.

5597. *By Mr. Nielson:* Are you aware that the shortage in the food supply is only gauged by the percentage of the increase in the population of the island? Of course, if you put more men there you will want more food.

5598. But the percentage by which you increase the existing population decides it? Yes, if you put men there carefully it is all right.

5599. Suppose an island has a population of 20,000 or 40,000, an influx of two or three might not make any difference to them; but if it has a population of 5,000, and you increase it by 2,500, then you increase it by 50 per cent., and that might make a difference? Yes, that would make a big difference.

5600. Have you any idea of the population of Malaya? No.

5601. Have you any idea of the size of the island? It is about 40 miles across by 160 miles long.

5602. Do you know if it is a fertile island? Yes.

5603. And thickly populated? No; although it is thickly populated compared to some islands, because there are islands down there which have not got a solitary soul living on them.

5604. We learn that it is—Do you think that the distribution of 2,000 or 3,000 men at various places around a coast line several hundred miles in length would exhaust their food supply? I should think so, because they do not keep a large food supply.

5605. How do you know? They did not do it in my time.

5606. You do not know what the bush men do, as you were never in the bush? I was 2 miles in the bush.

5607. There is no reliable information of what they do in the bush? I do not think anybody knows what is inside the island.

5608. That is the conclusion I came to? The only thing you know anything about is if you want to buy food there yourself.

5609. You only meet the bush men at the market? No; when your vessel gets to a bush "passage," as they all have special "passages" at which they land, you bang off some dynamite and let off guns to let them know that a ship is there. The "boys" who talk English then come down, and you say that you want ten shiploads of yams. They go away, and come back again, saying that you cannot get them, as they "no plenty."

5610. Then you only touch at one little spot? But if you do not get them there you go to another place. Sometimes you spend three months there if you are doing good business. You soon find out if food is plentiful in that way. They have good years and bad years just the same as we have.

5611. I suppose there are times when you cannot buy 5 tons of potatoes in Mackay? Yes; I believe so.

5612. You never heard anybody attempt to give the population of Malaya? No; I do not think anybody can give it. It can only be a guess. But, as far as I could see, I should say it was not a thickly-populated island.

5613. Have you been to New Guinea? Yes.

5614. Is it thickly populated? Parts of it are.

5615. Would you be surprised to know that they compute it at 300,000? I would not doubt it. New Guinea is the thickest populated of any of the islands I saw about. There is no comparison between New Guinea and Malaya.

5616. *By Mr. Paget:* You said, in answer to a question some time back, that the islanders may be sent home in large numbers by steamers, provided the food supply is secure? Yes.

5617. You also said you had another scheme? Yes; the cheapest way out of the business would be to let them go slowly, and let them provide for themselves in the meantime here. I have figured it out roughly. Say there are 6,000 "boys," and that the passage-money costs £7, then that would be £42,000. There would be a large number travelling in coastal steamers, although a large number would go straight away. I put the number who go away by coastal steamers at 1,500, and the extra amount at £2 a-piece, which would mean another £3,000. Allowing that they leave at the rate of 1,000 a month, which is as much as they will do—

5618. *By the Chairman:* How many boats do you think will be in use? There will be two steamers, and they will take 1,000 a month. They tried a steamer before—the "Corea"—and from some little recollection of what she did, I think that is what the steamers will do. Say you had 6,000 on the 1st of January, you would get rid of 1,000 the first month, but you would have to keep those awaiting shipment in food while they were here. I take it that their keep would run into anything from 8s. to 10s. a week, and that would mean £35,000.

5619. Before you got the last "boy" away? Yes, if you will not allow them to work after the 1st of January, someone will have to feed them.

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5620. *By Mr. Paget:* Would you propose that these islanders should be placed in dépôts? I would not propose that.

5621. What would you propose? You have to bring them in and have them ready for shipment. If you have them running all over the country they will be working illegally and getting into mischief. If they are not brought in early there will be trouble, and how are you going to feed them if you allow them to run about? You would also have to make some arrangements for a temporary supply of food at the islands, either by yam-planting or by taking down food. That would probably cost another £5,000—it might cost more. It would come somewhere in the neighbourhood of £80,000 or £90,000. In addition to that, you would want some camping grounds. One might be established at Homebush, another at Farleigh, and another in town. That would divide the kanakas in the district into three camps of about 300 each. One person could look after them; and, from my knowledge of the past, I believe that, so long as they were fed and clothed, there would not be much trouble. But, if they are allowed to wander about with nothing done for them, there is bound to be trouble. They will steal, and all that sort of thing.

5622. *By the Chairman:* What power have you to get the "boys" inside the four corners of a camp? They will stop there for the sake of getting their food. If a "boy" did not choose to go there for his food, he would not get any.

5623. Suppose the "boys" said they would not go there? If you told them to go there for their tucker they would go.

5624. What is your alternative scheme? It seems to be far the simpler, and if I were controlling the thing it is what I should do. I should use all available means to get away in the available vessels as soon as possible the "boys" who wanted to go, and I should allow the "boys" who could not get away because there was no accommodation for them to sign on again, and stop for one or two years.

5625. *By Mr. Nielson:* That is postponing the difficulty? No. There is a great deal of trouble about providing the money for the deportation, and the employers feel very much hurt about what has been put upon them. If you gave them a clean slate with regard to those who signed on again, and let their return passage go with their agreement—the £5 and the £2 and everything else—it would do away with half the cost, and instead of being paid in a few months it would be spread over a period of, perhaps, two years, so that it would be very much easier for the person who had to pay it, whether it was the Government or anyone else.

5626. There is something like £10,000 in the Pacific Islanders' Fund—Looking at it from a financial point of view, you would probably prefer that all the "boys" should stop here and die in Queensland, and then the Government would have to pay nothing at all? No. Probably by the end of this year, or the first month of next year, you would get 500 or 600 away—perhaps more. Every year the numbers have been decreasing at the rate of about 1,500. In a couple of years, with perhaps a little acceleration, you might make it 2,000, and then those that were left would not be anything like the burden that there is at present on the fund. You would materially reduce the liability, if you did not absolutely do away with it.

5627. How would you pick out the ones to be sent away first? Let them settle that themselves.

5628. Do you not think we would just have a recurrence of what we see now—that they would be primed up to say they do not want to go home—they would all want to stop to the last? I do not think they would all want to stop.

5629. They would all want to stop a little longer? Some would.

5630. *By the Chairman:* Is not the "Sydney Belle" leaving soon? She is advertised to go at the beginning of next month.

5631. Where is she going? To both groups.

5632. Is it not true that "boys" began to book their passages if they want to go? They have all been told that she is going. There are always a few dribbling away.

5633. Do you not think they will not want to go if there is a possibility of their being allowed to remain? I do not think there will be work for them.

5634. But do they recognise that? I think they do.

5635. We had "boys" here yesterday who were under the fallacious impression that because they had a piece of land they could not be deported—if they think that they will think anything? Of course.

5636. *By Mr. Nielson:* "Boys" have told us that they think the Government is only "gammoning" about it? They have not told me that.

5637. I am afraid there are more than "boys" who are under that impression? That may be.

5638. *By the Chairman:* Those are your two schemes? Yes. It must either be done quickly at a considerable cost or else more slowly at a lesser expenditure.

5639. *By Mr. Paget:* And make the next employer bear part of the cost? Yes. Let there be a clear understanding that he shall pay the return passage, treating the "boys" like the indentured "boys" used to be treated. He should take responsibility for everything, and I suppose he would have to find the usual bonds, in the same manner as they used to do.

5640. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is the Labour Bureau much availed of? Some years it is, but there are so many drawbacks to it that it is not nearly what it ought to be.

5641. Do the employers avail themselves of it? Both parties do; but I take it they only come to the bureau as a sort of last resort.

5642. Have you your books with you? I have the particulars. I have not the books; there are too many of them to bring along; but I have all the figures for the last three years.

5643. I would like to see your books, to see how the thing has been working month by month? I can give you the months, if you like, but I have not got them here.

5644. Have you an immigration dépôt here? There is a building known as a dépôt, but it is not used for anything now.

5645. We have learned in other districts that the Labour Bureau would be greatly assisted if there were a dépôt where nomads could camp, so as to be easily reached by the officer in charge of the bureau? That is so, but you would require caretakers. We are not allowed anything for that now.

5646. *By the Chairman:* Would you require a caretaker? Yes; it would be a very good thing. One of the principal troubles is that a man comes in to-day, and wants a job. I may not have an application for a man to-day, and I tell him to come to-morrow, or every day. In the afternoon I get a letter from an employer outside, saying he wants a man. The next morning I tell this man that John Smith, at Marian,

wants a man; but when he goes out to Marian he finds that John Smith has given the job to a man walking about the district. My man comes back and says "You have made a fool of me." I cannot help that.

F. C.
Hornbrook.
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5637. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think that if a bureau could be established in which employer and worker would co-operate it could be made of great assistance? Undoubtedly, if they will co-operate. On the other hand a man may start for a job and meet someone on the way looking for a man, and he engages with him. Then the man who wanted a workman says I did not send him a man. You cannot depend on them.

5638. *By the Chairman*: Can you suggest any means of overcoming those difficulties? They cannot be overcome unless the employer and the worker agree together not to engage anyone else on the one side or to engage with anyone else on the other.

5639. Are there any private registry offices in town? There are two or three.

5650. They charge a fee? 2s. 6d., I think.

5651. Does the employer pay when he applies for a man? I have had nothing to do with it, but I understand somebody has to pay 2s. 6d.

5652. In Brisbane, at any rate, the bureau becomes the agent of the unemployed? Yes; but they are more easily in communication there.

5653. You have telephonic communication with the large estates? Only within the last two or three months. It had all to be done by letter before that.

5654. What is the objection to the employer making you his agent? There is no objection. At present I am sometimes asked to send a man, and before I even get the letter he takes on another man, and leaves my man alone.

5655. But if he made you his agent, and you engaged a man for him, he would have to pay that man; and, knowing that, he would not engage another man? It would be all right if they did that, but an employer likes to see his man for himself.

5656. *By Mr. Nielson*: Could he not come in and see them if they were at your dépôt? Yes, he could. But suppose a man is at Plane Creek, that is .30 miles away. He wants a man and comes into town. He gets a man and engages him, and goes back home. Perhaps that man will not stop, and the employer has to come in again and get another man, and all that means delay.

5657. *By the Chairman*: You are not keeping the bureau for profit, but for the mutual advantage of employer and employee—You say, "These are the rates, and if you do not like them leave them alone"? That is what they do. At times I have to get men from Rockhampton and Townsville to fill orders, and they have come, with the result that I do not think they stop in their billets any time.

5658. Who pays their fares? The employer takes it out of their wages.

5659. Surely it only wants the initiation of a system? It was only the year before last that 100 men were sent up to the Proserpine on similar conditions, and the cane inspector told me that only three of those 100 men saw the work out. When men do these things the employer blames the man who sends them. He says, "What did you send me up a pack of men like that for?" I say, "They looked all right, and what could I do?"

5660. *By Mr. Payer*: Do you issue Government relief to men walking about? I issue it to many persons. There are different classes of them. I issue it to some permanent residents who are in need of it, and also to people travelling.

5661. What is your system of giving relief to travellers? That depends very much on circumstances. The general rule is, if a man comes along with his swag, and wants to look round for work, we give him three days' rations.

5662. And when you give him three days' rations, do you register him as one of the unemployed? No; we put him down as looking for work, and the three days' rations are given to him to enable him to travel along to the place he is going to.

5663. Do you keep a different register for the men who apply for work, and the men who apply for rations as well as work? They go into one book in the first place, and they are divided into separate books after.

5664. It has been suggested here that men travelling object to go to the bureau for the reason that they may be entered in the same book as those receiving relief? Those are the more independent men? How do they know what book they are entered into?

5665. That has been stated here? I never heard anything of the sort before.

[At a later stage of the day Mr. Hornbrook produced the records of the Labour Bureau which he had been asked to produce.]

CHARLES READE KLUGH, Manager for Paxton and Co., examined:

5666. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am manager for Messrs. Paxton and Co., and agent for the Australasian United Steamship Navigation Company in Mackay. C. R. Klugh.

5667. You have had many years' experience in the Western parts of this State? About thirty-five years. 18 April, 1906.

5668. How long have you been resident in Mackay? About three years.

5669. You know exactly what you are going to say, so I will not interrupt you? In view of the fact that the employment of black labour in the sugar industry will cease at the end of this year, and to help as far as they can to provide labour to replace the kanakas, the three shipping companies trading on the Queensland coast have already agreed to grant the Mossman mill a concession of 25 per cent. off steamer fares to Port Douglas (on the certificate of the mill) to all parties of ten labourers and over. I am informed that a similar concession would, doubtless, be granted to other mills and large employers at other ports.

5670. In that connection would you be disposed to suggest to the shipping company that in the case of single individual members of the working classes that are employed to come up here to work in the sugar industry, they should make a rebate? Yes, if they worked for a certain time here.

5671. They would receive a certificate that they have been working as cane workers for three months? Yes; I would make that recommendation.

5672. So long as men proved to you that they had work, would they be in the same position as the gang men? They would have to pay their full fare up.

C. R. Klugh. 5673. On receipt of the certificate your company will grant a rebate of 25 per cent.? Yes. I would recommend that to the company. I wish to add a few words about the chances of labourers from the West. With regard to labour, I can only say, as a thirty-year resident in the Western country, that I feel sure that, owing to the recent rains having washed away miles of fencing, and destroyed many water improvements, and to the necessity of making further improvements for the increase of the flocks in the West, a great amount of the Western labour that has drifted to the sugar district during the past three seasons will find work they are used to and prefer in their old Western districts, and will cause a still greater scarcity of labour. Other members of the Chamber of Commerce will give their views on what they consider the best steps to be taken to replace the labour the sugar districts are losing.

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5674. *By Mr. Paget*: You are appearing as a representative of the Chamber of Commerce? Yes. The evidence I am giving is given with the approval of the chamber.

5675. *By the Chairman*: Do you not think that the Western man will willingly live on the coast, or will his sympathies lead him back to the West? I feel quite sure that if he can earn a living in the West he will stay there in preference to coming to the coast.

5676. The employers here must not look for permanent labour from the West? I do not think so.

5677. *By Mr. Paget*: We had a witness this morning who said that he was certain that the Western men would prefer working on the coast, provided the wages were suitable? I have always seen them go back. Last year several men, knowing that I was interested in the West, asked for work out there, and they told me that they infinitely preferred working in the West.

5678. *By the Chairman*: Is there any other matter you could refer to that would be of assistance to the Commission? I have not been here long enough to speak about sugar.

JAMES GRANT ENRIGHT, Journalist, examined:

J. G. Enright. 5679. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A journalist just now.

5680. On what points do you wish to give evidence? I have had experience of North Queensland for nearly thirty years amongst the workers.

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5681. In what part of it? All north of Mackay.

5682. Will you tell us what you wish to put before us? At the outset, I may say that I receive correspondence regularly from the Western districts. At present the Machine Shearers' Union are engaging labour in New South Wales for the shearing, and a number of the men in the West will be returning to the sugar districts as soon as the crushing season starts.

5683. For what reason? The southern men are shutting them out of the shearing. Besides that, many of them have been here before, and they find they can get more employment here than in the West.

5684. The heat does not frighten them? They reckon that sugar working is about the best work they can be employed in. This is about the most aristocratic toil they can get.

5685. Is it harder than shearing? They think it easier than any other kind of manual labour. In connection with the deportation of the Pacific Islanders, last year there were something like 1,400 coloured aliens left Queensland, including about 1,000 kanakas. There was no shortage in consequence of their departure. In the Mackay district there are about one-sixth of all the kanakas in Queensland. That would mean that you would want about 1,000 extra labourers to make up for the departure of the kanakas. Well, you can get that number of labourers in the Northern districts without sending away for them. I am talking of the district from Rockhampton out West, and including Charters Towers, Ravenswood, and Townsville.

5686. At the present time? Yes, I think so. At Charters Towers there is much depression at the present time. I was there a little over twelve months ago, and there were fully 1,000 unemployed then, but there was not so much depression. In connection with this I would like to point out that in mining the work is so severe that old men, and middle-aged men, get tired of it in a few years, and the young men coming on shove them out. Besides that, there are a number of young men who cannot find employment there. Between the two lots you will get settlers as well as the usual labour required.

5687. Have you any basis for your knowledge as to the numbers? Well, the number of men employed on Charters Towers is 3,000. The population is 24,000 or 25,000.

5688. *By Mr. Paget*: A large number are engaged in woodchopping and contracting for wood supply? There are a good number.

5689. That is over and above the men who are actually mining? Yes.

5690. We have a return showing the number of unemployed on Charters Towers up till the 31st March, and it gives the number as 400? In connection with that I would like to point out that there are a large number of men who refuse to put their names down. They have a strong objection to going near the Labour Bureau at all.

5691. Can you tell us why that is? Most people who go to the bureau go for relief, and the independent toiler will not go where there is anything of the kind. He would sooner battle along on his own, and put up with his misery.

5692. *By the Chairman*: The returns show Clermont nil and Longreach nil, so far as unemployed are concerned; Ravenswood gives 60, but the men are gradually leaving the district; Charters Towers gives 400.

5692a. And what is Townsville? We have not got a return from Townsville.

5693. You think you can get 1,000 men from Charters Towers? Honestly, I think I can.

5694. Would mining men be satisfied with £1 a week and rations in the slack season and 30s. a week and rations in the crushing season? They would be satisfied with the 30s. a week and reasonable food in the crushing season, but they would not be satisfied with the £1 a week and found in the slack season.

5695. What would they want in the slack season? About 25s. a week.

5696. You would find a number willing to work for that? Yes. The fallacy that miners earn £3 a week is exploded. The average wage on Charters Towers is £2 a week.

5697. Do they not get 10s. a shift? Only those on the face.

5698. *By Mr. Paget*: And they have to keep themselves? Yes, and pay heavy rents, too. There are different classes of men in the mines. The men working on the face get 10s. a shift, but the truckers and mullockers get only from 30s. to £2 10s. a week, so that it brings the average down.

5699. *By the Chairman*: You think then that we have not to proceed very far to supersede the kanaka. J. G. Enright.
in this district? No.

5700. Can you tell us anything about the Northern district? There are 200 men at the Mossman who refused to sign an agreement, as they considered it too arbitrary, and the Mossman people are sending here for labour. 18 April, 1906.

5701. Was that lately? Yes; only lately.

5702. *By Mr. Paget*: Did they refuse to sign the contracts on the scale published in the Mackay papers? No; that is their maximum scale. I believe six of them have signed the agreement, and that is all that will sign. They have sent to Victoria for labour, and brought it up from there.

5703. *By Mr. Paget*: Did you see an advertisement in the Mackay *Standard* headed "Canecutters Wanted"? Yes. That is for the Mossman, and I have received a letter warning men from going there, as there are 200 men there already. I had a letter from a correspondent there, and he tells me the men refused to sign the agreement because it was arbitrary, and they also had other objections to it.

5704. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know the rates paid at the Mossman? I read the maximum rate which was published.

5705. Did you read the advertisement signed by the manager of the mill? I just scanned it.

5706. Calling for men and stating the rates they were paying? Yes.

5707. Do you know if the rates they are offering are higher than Mackay? I did not look at the rates. The cost of living, I understand, is much higher up there than it is here.

5708. *By the Chairman*: And six months' work is offered—the crushing will start early in June, and last for six months? All I know is from the men who are there. They refuse to take the wages that are offering, so they cannot be so very tempting.

5709. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you acting as agent for these men, or for any bodies of men? I am here as a representative of the labour class. I am a labour journalist, and I am representing a labour newspaper and myself as a citizen.

5710. *By the Chairman*: Have you anything more to say? I would like to say something in connection with the Labour Bureau. I think we should have a properly constituted Labour Bureau, not only for the sugar districts, but for the whole of Queensland. What I would suggest would be that in the populous centres the Inspectors of Factories and Shops should be in charge of the Labour Bureau, and the same man could administer the Shearers and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act. You could run the three in one, and place them under a man who is in sympathy with the men who have to look for a job as well as with the employer.

5711. Do you think there is any objection to the same officer issuing relief, and controlling the Labour Bureau? From my experience of the working class, I know they think it is degrading to go near the bureau as it is at present constituted.

5712. Why—Is it because in some instances relief is issued? I do not think the officers are in sympathy with the men when they go there, and they do not treat them properly. They treat them as some inferior class.

5713. Surely they treat them with courtesy? I do not think they do, and from what I hear from the men they are not treated with courtesy; but I have only hearsay for that.

5714. Do you think the men who have had dealings with the Labour Bureau would give evidence? I do not think so. Rations are issued there, and it might be thought the men went for rations. I know men who would sooner go hungry than ask for rations. I think if you had a proper Labour Bureau, instead of men coming to the district and having to go and look for work, they would be in the town, and would provide most of the labour for the district. The employers would then soon come along. It would not be a hardship on the men, as it is at present, where men have to go to Plane Creek looking for a job; and it would not be a hardship for the employer to have to ride in and look for workers. Instead of riding, the only trouble it would be to him would be that he would have to telephone up to the bureau. At the present time the men have to bear all the hardship. Many men travel through a district, and if they cannot get work they go straight away again.

5715. What can be done to remove the stigma from the bureau, so that every man will register there? In New Zealand I think they have no trouble, because they have a State Department of Labour. The distribution of the unemployed is done through the Labour Bureau, and men out of work register there. In each district in New Zealand they get a report of the conditions of the labour market every month, and for 2d. a man can buy that report, and see where labour is wanted. If he has no money he is provided with a railway pass, and the amount of the fare is deducted from his wages afterwards.

5716. *By Mr. Paget*: They do that in Queensland? But a man has to almost beg of the police to get a pass before they will give him one here.

5717. The complaint was made in Bundaberg that too many men were sent up there on passes? Yes; that is the men from Brisbane. The men up here very seldom avail themselves of it. I have known men to walk from Charters Towers to Townsville rather than ask for a pass.

5718. Of course one of the difficulties in connection with the sugar industry in the North is that there is no railway communication? Yes.

5719. The large centres of population in the South are connected by rail, and it is easy to get railway passes, but it is different in the North? The only way is to do the same as people do when they are hiring a girl in the South. If anyone wants a girl they arrange for her fare to be paid and an agreement is entered into that if she completes a certain time she earns the fare, but if she leaves her employment during that period her employer deducts the amount of her fare. In many instances you could arrange for the fare to be paid on the steamers, and many would agree to work out the amount afterwards.

5720. Would you propose that wages men coming here in the crushing season should have their fares advanced, and if they worked four or five months then the fare would be allowed them, but if they did not carry out their agreement the amount of the fare should be deducted? Yes; I would. There is another matter in connection with the bureau, and that is, there is nothing advertised about the bureaus, and the men do not know anything about them.

5721. *By Mr. Nielson*: The advertising appeals to you as a newspaper man? I was not thinking of that. A man has to go to the bureau to find out whether there is a job or not. If they had a board outside, and information posted on it showing whether men were wanted, a good deal of trouble would be saved. Some time ago they used to publish a list of unclaimed letters, and they could do something like that now.

J. G. Enright. 5723. You are probably in favour of putting these reports up at public places like railway stations? Not necessarily. When a gang of wharf lumpers is wanted to work a cargo, there is a board outside the shipping office, with the names of the gang on it. If you had a similar board in some conspicuous place in the town, men would have a look at it, and, if there was a job offering, they could make inquiries about it. The Labour Bureau could keep a list of the men who registered, and the wages; but I would have it quite apart from the relief business. In connection with the deportation of kanakas, they should change the officials who have to do with the work of deportation.

18 April, 1906. 5724. *By Mr. Paget*: No deportation officers have been appointed? I understand that the present inspectors of Pacific Islanders will have to see to it.

5725. *By the Chairman*: It is their duty to register the names of those who wish to go? Without reflecting upon the present inspectors, if a strange man was sent into this district, he would find a number of kanakas who want to go home. Numbers have told me that they want to go, but they do not know there is a ship going until a few days beforehand.

5726. You know the "boys" change their minds very frequently? If they had fixed dates, and the "boys" were told that there was a boat going on a certain date, they would be ready to go.

5727. They alter their minds in a few days? I do not know much about the kanakas.

5728. *By Mr. Paget*: The difficulty really is that a schooner is advertised to go on a certain date, and a number of "boys" in various parts of the State say that they wish to return home; but before that date they alter their minds and the schooner cannot go? I have never seen an advertisement like that in this district.

Rev. JOHN McLEAN McINTYRE, Missionary to the Kanakas under the Presbyterian Church, examined:

Rev. J. McL. McIntyre. 5729. *By the Chairman*: What are you? Missionary to the kanakas under the Presbyterian Church.

5730. Where are you stationed? At Walken-ton.

5731. How many kanakas are connected with your mission? About 500.

5732. Are they all baptised? Not all of them.

5733. What proportion of them are baptised? Something over 300.

5734. I suppose some of them are married? Yes.

5735. Have their children been baptised? The children of those who have been married according to the law of the State have been baptised, but not the children of those who have been married according to island rites.

5736. You do not baptise the children of those who are not married? No.

5737. How many children have been baptised? Twenty-six.

5738. Have you any idea of the number of children who are not baptised? Fifteen.

5739. Are any of the islanders married to white women? Not one under our mission.

5740. They are all married to kanaka women or to aboriginals? To kanaka women.

5741. Do many of them wish to return to the islands? Some are willing, others are indifferent, others keenly resent deportation.

5742. Have those who are willing to go taken any steps to register their names with Mr. Hornbrook? I have two who are walking about at the present time who have been about eight times to the office during the last two or three weeks to try and get away, and one man said to me, "It is a shameful thing. We have been paid off some time; altogether money finished, and no schooner to take us home."

5743. What island do they belong to? Pentecost. The "Sydney Belle" is going to the New Hebrides in about a fortnight.

5744. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are these "boys" not aware that their last employer is bound to maintain them until the schooner takes them away? I do not think so.

5745. Have you never informed them? Yes; but it is a long time since I mentioned it to them.

5746. Have the "boys" not asked Mr. Hornbrook to see that they are maintained? I do not think so. I do not know of one case.

5747. Do they understand, as a whole, that their last employer is bound to keep them until they can get a ship? Some of them may realise the fact, but the majority of them do not.

5748. You might do them a charitable act by informing them of the fact? I might.

5749. *By the Chairman*: Have you anything to suggest as to the most humane manner of deporting those who must be deported? I think it would be most inhuman to send 2,500 "boys" to Malaya, for instance. The better way would be to send 200 or 300 as pioneers, in order that they might cultivate the land, and have sufficient food for those who follow.

5750. Have you a personal knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the islands? I have never been there.

5751. *By Mr. Nielson*: You grasp the difficulty that may arise with those 200 or 300, as they might be distributed one here and another there, all round the islands? That is so.

5752. *By the Chairman*: Their efforts might be greatly neutralised in that way? But there are a good many Christians on Malaya, and, with the assistance of the 200 or 300, I think they could grow sufficient.

5753. Has your mission any stations on Malaya? We have "boys" there. They are under the control of the Queensland Kanaka Mission—Miss Young's mission.

5754. *By Mr. Nielson*: There is a Church of England Mission there? Yes.

5755. *By the Chairman*: Have you anything more to say? The organising secretary of the Anglican Church says it would be most inhuman to send men to the Solomons in numbers when there are 50,000 natives and only 1,000 Christians.

5756. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think the estimate of 50,000 is fairly correct? I think so.

5757. *By Mr. Paget*: Is that the estimated population of the whole of the Solomons? Yes. I think the population of Malaya is from 15,000 to 20,000.

5758. Who made that estimate? The Rev. R. M. Faithful Davis, Organising Secretary in Australia of the Melanesian Mission.

5759. When was that statement made? Last year, in a speech delivered in Hobart, Tasmania.

5760. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you can tell us? I have one widow farming some land the other side of the river. Her children were all born in Queensland—I think in this district.

5761. What is her name? Kate. She is a Malicolo woman. Her late husband was Stephen Sufalissie.

5762. Under what tenure does she hold her land? I understand she has a leasehold. Her daughters do not want to leave Queensland.

5763. How old are her daughters? I married the eldest eight or nine months ago, and she was twenty-one years of age.

5764. Has she married a Pacific Islander? Yes. He also was born in Queensland.

5765. Mr. Hornbrook is furnishing a return, which will no doubt include her? Yes. There is one thing more I would like to say. I do not think there will be any difficulty in lauding the islanders belonging to the New Hebrides—that is, if they are landed at the mission stations—judging by letters I have received from several of the missionaries.

5766. Except possibly in connection with the food supply—With the best of intentions, there might not be enough? Mr. Paton, in writing in February last, said they had an extra quantity of arrowroot on Malicolo. In fact, they had so much that the natives were enabled to pay off the debt on their new church.

5767. By Mr. Nielson: Have you learned whether it would be quite safe in the New Hebrides to land a kanaka "boy" who is married to a woman belonging to another island, though of the same group? I think it would be very unsafe.

5768. Do you know Mr. John Thompson, missionary at Childers? No.

5769. He informed us that he would be just as safe in the New Hebrides as in Queensland, particularly where there were mission stations? —

5770. By the Chairman: I suppose if they were landed at a mission station and remained there they would be safe? Yes.

CHARLES CRACE SAGE, Church of England Missioner to the Melanesians in Mackay, examined:

5771. By the Chairman: Are you stationed in Mackay? About 4 miles from Mackay.

5772. I believe you are connected with the Melanesian Mission? With the Selsyn Mission.

5773. How many Polynesians have you connected with your mission? I think about 500, but Mr. McIntyre's statement this morning contradicts me. I should say there are between 500 and 600, and about 400 of them are Christians.

5774. Are they baptised? Yes.

5775. Do you know what number are married? There are fifteen married.

5776. Have those people any children? Yes; they have about forty children.

5777. What is the feeling amongst the members of your mission as to returning to the islands? There is a feeling of unrest amongst them.

5778. Do they wish to go? The majority wish to go.

5779. From what group do the majority come? From the Solomons.

5780. Are you taking steps to get them away as soon as possible? Yes, under Bishop Frodsham's scheme.

5781. That is at Fiu? Yes.

5782. Were you ever there? No.

5783. Were you ever told that Fiu was a swamp? I will read what is said about Fiu by the clergyman in charge there. He says he is glad I am coming, and, in describing the district, he says: "It would be an excellent place for houses and gardens. It is partially cleared and it could soon be got ready for cultivation." From what I can understand from the "boys," Fiu must be the name of the district, and it appears, from what Mr. Hopkins says, that he is 5 miles from it.

5784. As soon as a ship is going will you send the "boys" away at once? The bishop is waiting now.

5785. There is a ship going to the Solomons directly—Will you send some of the "boys" away by it? Yes.

5786. There is nothing to be gained by keeping those "boys" here? I have been moving to get the "boys" away, but they have been misled.

5787. How were they misled? Some of them have got the notion that if they take up land they need not go home.

5788. They think they will be allowed to remain? Yes, and they have taken up land on that understanding.

5789. And they really do not want to go home? Not for a year or two. Some of them want to remain.

5790. Is it your intention to send away as many as will go by the next boat? I will send them as soon as possible.

5791. But that is vague? It was my intention to send them all away, but my intention has been upset by these misleading statements.

5792. Will you send as many as will go? Many of them have agreements.

5793. But those whose agreements have expired? I will send them. No doubt they will come with me when I go.

5794. By Mr. Paget: Do you intend to send them to this settlement at Fiu? Yes.

5795. But are you not aware that under their agreements they must be sent to the "passages" from which they were recruited? We think that if they elect to go down to Fiu they can do so.

5796. That is a matter for the department? Yes. Of course the bishop has been trying to get permission to land them at Fiu. We do not intend to send them to Fiu until permission has first been obtained.

5797. Before you arrange for "boys" to be sent to this new settlement, is it your intention to communicate with the department and tell them that the islanders wish to be sent there? Yes. We had no intention of doing otherwise.

5798. Have you anything further to say? This morning a statement was made about the scarcity of food there. Well, the Bishop of Melaneia can be relied on, and he has just been spending six months doing work amongst the Solomon Islands. He said there was a great scarcity of food, and he told me that when I bring the first batch I must not forget to bring some rice.

5799. By Mr. Nielson: They had a drought there last year? They have had rains there recently.

5800. By the Chairman: Is the Bishop of Melanesia in Australia? No, he has just left Norfolk Island for the islands.

Rev. J. McL.
McIntyre.

18 April, 1906.

C. C. Sage.

18 April, 1906.

- C. C. Sage. 5801. He recommends you to take some rice back? Yes. That is on account of the scarcity of food.
5802. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know if the "boys" go in for cultivating at that settlement? There are already some Christians there.
- 18 April, 1906. 5803. *By the Chairman*: Are they doing any cultivating? Yes; but not on a big scale. They are simply doing it for themselves.
5804. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are they cultivating on account of their countrymen returning? I understand Mr. Hopkins is doing that. The bishop wishes us to take a pioneer party of "boys" to cultivate land.
5805. *By the Chairman*: How long would it take to get a crop there with the pioneer party? Three months. Sweet potatoes and pumpkins grow very quickly.
5806. *By Mr. Nielson*: They grow all the year round? Yes. You can get two or three crops a year from them.
5807. When will you take this party? My superior, Bishop Frodsham, has got a scheme in hand now.
5808. You are waiting to get a subsidy? Yes. It is to assist those who have families born here that we want the subsidy. It is not for the single men.
5809. *By the Chairman*: Is it worth while waiting for that—Would it not be better to make an effort on your own account, and send a lot of the single men down to the islands to start gardening? I think the bishop intends that I shall take some of them. No doubt you saw the telegram in the papers asking me to proceed to the islands at once and get the place ready.
5810. When do you propose to go? I hope to go by the boat leaving on 10th May.
5811. *By Mr. Nielson*: What boat is that? Messrs. Burns, Philp, and Co.'s steamer.
5812. *By the Chairman*: Will you take "boys" down by her? As many as I can get to go with me.
5813. How many do you hope to get? I was hoping to get fifty, but they have all signed on again, and their agreements are to the end of the year, so that it is doubtful whether I shall be able to get fifty at the present time.
5814. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have not many "boys" been anxious to go home during the last twelve months who did not go? Yes.
5815. Do you know why they did not go? Bother about the ships. They could never get a proper understanding as to when they were to sail. I have known "boys" go day after day for weeks without getting definite information. That meant that they were spending their money, and they had to go back to earn more.
5816. They did not like to go home empty-handed? That is so. An islander will not go unless he has his box full of material to give to his friends.
5817. *By the Chairman*: Could you not have put things straight on their behalf? I have done all I can.
5818. Did you communicate with the head office in Brisbane? No.
5819. Did you communicate with the local officer? I cannot say that I have. The only way I helped was in getting the "boys" to go and insist on keeping them up to it.
5820. If you had seen Mr. Hornbrook, it would have been all right? Perhaps it would, but I gave Mr. Hornbrook credit for knowing, and for telling the "boys" when the boats were going.
5821. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you know whether it is in the power of the local officer to provide schooners for the islanders' return—It is very easy to make assertions you know? He is in communication with the authorities regarding the boats. He informs the "boys" when the boats are going. Of course, unless the Southern people inform him, I do not suppose he can inform the "boys."
5822. Have you any reason to believe that he has not done his duty by not getting information that he should have got? From hearsay I should say so. So I have gathered from the "boys."
5823. Do you not think it was your duty, as the spiritual adviser of the "boys," to communicate with the head office if you found that the local officer was not doing his duty? If you put the question in that way—
5824. I am obliged to put it in that way, because a public officer's reputation has been brought into question? I quite understand that, and I do not hesitate to make the statement that I have heard the "boys" say so, and I believe that is the reason why the "boys" have signed on again.
5825. I suppose you are aware that islanders change their minds at times? I know that only too well. I do not suppose anyone knows it better than one who teaches them. I have been disappointed by them. "Boys" have come and said good-bye to me, and yet they have re-engaged.
5826. They are mostly Malayta "boys" that your mission in Mackay? Yes, and Guadalcana "boys."
5827. Not many New Hebrides "boys"? No.
5828. Your mission was founded by Mrs. Robinson? Yes.
5829. *By the Chairman*: Do the 500 or 600 "boys" connected with your mission attend school or church? They attend one or other of the schools. I have five or six schools under my supervision.
5830. *By Mr. Paget*: In what localities? Farleigh, Homebush, Habana.
5831. Is there one at Habana now? Yes. I have a big one there.
5832. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are there many of those "boys" out of work? Not many at present.
5833. Are there any of them who were hard up before they went back to work? Yes.
5834. Do you think that circumstance had any influence on their signing on again? I think it had.
5835. *By Mr. Paget*: The islander is something like other people—when he has made a cheque he likes to take a spell, and when he has spent his money he goes to work again? Yes. I know some who have spelled for three or four months.
5836. *By the Chairman*: Have you anything more to say? Some schemes were suggested by Mr. Hornbrook this morning for the chiefs to grow food to make provision for the returned islanders. I do not think it advisable that the chiefs should have the handling of the tobacco that Mr. Hornbrook spoke of. I was in New Guinea for five and a-half years, and my experience there leads me to believe that it would not be safe to trust it to the chiefs. I think the suggestion was made by the Resident Commissioner that small depôts should be formed in the islands, and that the men should be deported straight away.
5837. You would need to have a man in charge of each of those depôts, and each of them would need to have a small bodyguard—that would be rather expensive? It will be expensive in any case to deport them.
5838. But this would be an extra expense? I do not think you would find many places in which it was necessary to do it. The Bishop of Melanesia has an extensive work down there, and has some hundreds

of mission stations on the different islands, and in a letter to me he stated that it was not unsafe for the islanders to go to any of the mission stations, and that the missionary or the "boy" in charge of the various stations would take charge of the "boys."

C. C. Sage.
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5839. Then you would advocate having them placed at the various mission stations? Where there is a mission station. The Bishop's heart is in the matter, and he would help in every possible way.

THOMAS RYAN, Cane Farmer, examined :

T. Ryan.
18 April, 1906.

5840. *By the Chairman*: Where do you live? I have farms in Mackay and at the Mossman.

5841. Where is your land here? At Homebush.

5842. What area have you got under cane at Homebush? About 3 acres.

5843. What area have you got at the Mossman? 300 acres.

5844. Do you use white or black labour? Black and white.

5845. Are you registered for the bonus this year? No. I would like to have you explain the sense of this inquiry. I do not know what it is about.

5846. We want to know how the 6,000 kanakas at present in Queensland are to be deported, and whether there is sufficient white labour available to cultivate the cane in the absence of the kanakas; and, if not, how sufficient labour can be obtained—that is the point that interests you most. What do you say as to the supply of white labour on the Mossman? I do not think we can get sufficient white labour on the Mossman.

5847. Did you employ white men last year? No.

5848. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you ever tried white labour in cane cultivation? Yes.

5849. On any scale? I know what a white man can do.

5850. Have you never tried it? No; I never grew cane by white labour.

5851. *By the Chairman*: Can you suggest any means by which you can get white labour there? No; but what I would suggest—it is what I suggested at the Agricultural Conference in Cairns—is that all the kanakas in the State should be left here; let them die a natural death in Queensland, and let those who wish go home.

Unfortunately that is a suggestion we cannot listen to, because we have nothing to do with it—The Legislature has decided they have to go? I would like to know how our present Government have turned round now to appoint a Commission to inquire into this matter?

That is a thing we cannot discuss at all, and I must ask you not to refer to it? Well, I want to know about this Commission—

I will not allow you to refer to that any more. If you have anything that is within the scope of the Commission you will hear you? I just want to say about this Commission—

The Chairman: I will not allow you to go on with that. I must ask you to retire and make way for the next witness.

EDWARD DENMAN, Farmer, residing in Mackay, examined :

E. Denman.
18 April, 1906.

5852. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your holding? About 579 acres.

5853. How much of that is under cane? About 3 acres.

5854. How much did you cut last year? Three acres. It does not belong to me; it belongs to my youngsters.

5855. What object have you in appearing here as a witness? I was asked to come here. I have had a large experience in canegrowing, and I have turned out more than 6,000 tons.

5856. You think it cannot be profitably grown by white labour? I do not think it can, or I would be growing it now.

5857. Will there be enough white labour in this district to take the place of the kanakas when they are deported? I am sure there will not.

5858. Can you suggest any means by which white labour can be introduced into this district? No, I cannot. My experience of white labour is that white men have an objection to the work.

5859. I suppose you cannot help us at all? I have heard some of the evidence, and I would like to pass some remarks on the evidence that I heard.

5860. You had better look at this Commission, and see the scope of our inquiry? Do you want to put me out of the court?

Mr. Nielson: We cannot waste time; that is all.

[*The Commission was here handed to Mr. Denman for his inspection.*]

Witness: I should have not come here personally only I was asked to come.

The Chairman: If you confine yourself to the scope of the inquiry we will listen to what you have got to say.

Witness: I want to deal with the remarks you made this morning. This Commission is going altogether outside the scope of its inquiry. The Commission has been giving advice about the return of the islanders. That is not what it was appointed for.

The Chairman: I am not going to listen to anything of that sort. If you wish to give evidence you may do so, but you must not make statements like that. We have nothing to do with statements like that.

Witness: Well, speaking on the question of the deportation of the kanakas. In 1892—

The Chairman: We have nothing to do with what happened then.

Witness: Well, it bears on the whole question.

The Chairman: It does not bear on the subject-matter of this inquiry.

Witness: The liability of employers was brought up this morning.

The Chairman: It may have been mentioned incidentally. That is a matter for the employers.

Witness: It has been taken over by the Government, and does not rest with the employers at all.

The Chairman: But that has nothing to do with this Commission.

Witness: I am afraid I do not know what good the Commission is at all. It seems to me that Mr.

Nielson does not want me to give any evidence.

The Chairman: I am much obliged to you for coming here this morning, but you cannot help us at all. Who is the next witness? [*The witness here retired.*]

JOSEPH BARLOW, Canecutter and Contractor from New South Wales, examined:

- J. Barlow. 5861. *By the Chairman*: What part of New South Wales do you come from? I come from the Richmond River.
- 18 April, 1906. 5862. And you are at present on a visit to Mackay and the Northern parts of the State with a view to ascertaining the conditions under which work is offering for canecutting next season? Yes.
5863. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you a practical canecutter? I have done a lot of it. I am a fitter by trade, but I have worked amongst the cane in all stages.
5864. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you made any inquiries here regarding the prospects of getting employment or contracts for next season? I have hardly had time yet. I have only been here for a few days.
5865. Have you made any inquiries as to the rates offering for canecutting in this district? Very little as yet.
5866. Have you made any comparison between the conditions of harvesting cane here and those which obtain on the Richmond and Clarence Rivers? Until such time as I have seen through the crops it would be impossible to form an opinion as to the prices offering here and in New South Wales, because it depends a lot on the quality of the crop you have to cut.
5867. Have you heard of the prices offering here? Yes.
5868. Do you think those prices are such as will induce men to come from your district to Mackay? That will depend on the crops. I cannot give you that information until I see the crop, and the position the crop is grown in.
5869. As to the position, you mean whether the ground is on level or hilly country? Yes, to see whether it is on level or hilly country, and also notice whether it is properly cleared to allow you to shift the cane with ease. If it is rough country and not cleared, you will require a bigger price to enable you to clear it. If it is stripped, you can get through more cane, and if you have a better weight of cane, you will not want to shift the lines of the portable tramway so much.
5870. The lighter the crop the greater the price you want for cutting and loading? Yes, that is it.
5871. Do you represent a number of men on the Richmond River on this trip? I do in one way. A considerable number of men have asked me to send back the conditions under which the cane is worked, and if the conditions are suitable, they are prepared to come up.
5872. About how many are prepared to come up to this neighbourhood? Five gangs, consisting of thirty, forty, or fifty men altogether, perhaps, from one small centre.
5873. Would they come up and stop here solely on your representations? Yes. If the conditions here are more favourable than what they can get down there, they will certainly come.
5874. Will it mean that when those men leave your district there will not be sufficient men left to harvest down there? There will be plenty of men down there because there are plenty of men turned away every year who cannot get work.
5875. *By Mr. Paget*: Is that men who are not used to it? No; it includes men who have put twenty years in at it.
5876. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do the men in your district get any information concerning the conditions prevailing in the sugar districts? Only a little that was printed in the papers two months ago.
5877. Do you think if they got official information published by the Government and from official sources they would rely on that? Yes, on condition that the information supplied included the weight of the crop and the position the ground is in, whether it is hilly country or level, and whether it is cleared or rough ground. A man might send down the information that the price is 4s. 6d. per ton, yet in some cases a man getting 2s. 6d. per ton will make more than a man getting 7s. per ton, owing to the nature of the country.
5878. Do you think the following prices would be sufficient to induce men to come here:—Over 18 tons to the acre, 3s. 6d. per ton; from 12 to 18 tons per acre, 4s. and 3s. 6d.; and under 12 tons to the acre, to make arrangements? I would like to know if the farmers would supply tools, rations, and a place to camp.
5879. I do not think they do in this district? Rations are supplied down south.
5880. *By Mr. Paget*: That would be a matter for you to make inquiries about from the representatives of the Farmers' Association and the Sugar Workers' Union? On the Southern rivers, rations are all supplied to the gangs.
5881. And tools and tents also? Yes, the farmer has to supply tools and tents and rations, and take the men to the canefields in punts.
5882. *By Mr. Nielson*: There is no punting here? No.
5883. *By Mr. Paget*: Have they carried on that system on the northern rivers of New South Wales for very long? Yes, since canegrowing was started there twenty years ago.
5884. Have you ever been in Queensland before? Yes; I was in the South for a few months.
5885. Have you seen any of the canefields since your arrival here? None of the cane.
5886. Have you ever seen cane in Queensland? Yes, there was some very fair cane around Bundaberg when I was there some years ago.
5887. At Childers? Yes.
5888. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not know that in Queensland the cane stands up straighter than it does where you come from? Yes; it is mostly cut at twelve months, but in the northern part of New South Wales it is fifteen months to two years old.
5889. Mostly two years? Yes.
5890. *By the Chairman*: Is it not better cutting twelve months old cane? Yes, if it is well grown. When cane grows up to 20 feet high it is awkward cutting it when it is two years old. I think if the information was supplied to the southern rivers, and the prices and average crop given, it would be useful to the canecutters of New South Wales.
5891. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think the men from your district who came here would remain in Queensland altogether? Some would and some would not.
5892. *By Mr. Paget*: They have been born and bred there, and they always like to return home? Yes; they always like to get back to where they were reared.
5893. Are none of them anxious to settle on the land? Yes; there are any amount of them anxious to settle on the land if they can get the land to settle on.

5894. *By the Chairman*: Would those be men who would be able to purchase direct from the Crown if they could get land? Some of them have from £100 to £150, and are fairly well to do. J. Barlow.
5895. Those are men who would come over if they could get the cane? Yes; their sons are settling in the southern part of Queensland now. 18 April, 1906.
5896. *By Mr. Nielson*: What wages do you think men will expect to earn in Queensland during the harvesting season? In New South Wales they clear from £9 to £11 a month and rations. I can give you the earnings of the top and the lowest gangs. On the Clarence River the lowest gang earned in a month £75 and the highest £77.
5897. How long did the season last? I could not find out the exact length. For fourteen weeks, on the Richmond River, it was £33; on the Tweed, for five months, £56.
5898. *By Mr. Paget*: Was £33 the average for the Richmond River? That was the lowest. I do not know what the highest was. Rations were found in addition to that.
5899. On the Tweed? It is rations right through there. The millowners engaged the gangs and sent them out. It is not the farmers who deal with the gangs there.
5900. Do the men share and share alike? Yes; cook and all alike.
5901. *By the Chairman*: Are you going further North than this? I do not know yet. It just depends on what information I get from up there.
5902. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you had any information from the North? One or two gentlemen came down from there who have been looking for work, and they could not get it. They say that they are full-handed on the Mossman and up there.
5903. You have learned that since you came to Mackay? Yes. They came in by the boat yesterday from the Mossman.
5904. Did they give you to understand that they would not get a job there when the harvesting started? They did not say that distinctly, but they said they could not come to terms. I was led to believe that the harvesting is just starting on the Mossman.
5905. *Mr. Paget*: No; it does not start until June.
5906. *By the Chairman*: I suppose you realise that the shortage of employment is owing to the fact that the cane is out of hand, and there is really nothing to do? They did not say exactly why it was they could not get work there, but they gave me to understand they could not get employment in the mills.
5907. Did they give you any information as to the rates of wages ruling there? They said there were some men who were offering 1s. a ton for stripping, and they reckoned from the weight of cane that they would make about 1s. 6d. a day out of it.
5908. *By Mr. Paget*: The crop was too light? Yes. One man said there were more acres than tons. I do not know whether that is reliable or not.
5909. *By Mr. Nielson*: What do the men in your district find to do during the slack season? There are many other industries there. Dairying is carried on very largely. The leading factory there pays up to £10,000 a month for cream.
5910. But what do the men employed in the sugar harvesting do during the off season? A great proportion go back to Sydney, and to other places. A lot of them are small farmers who work on their own land and go out cutting cane during the crushing season.
5911. What sized holdings do they have? From 40 acres up.
5912. Agricultural land? Some agricultural, some grass land.
5913. *By Mr. Paget*: Their holdings are probably too far away to grow cane for the mills profitably? They are not on the parts of the rivers where they grow cane. The frost is very severe in places.
5914. What wages are paid on the Rivers for ordinary cultivation during the off season? I am not prepared to say exactly. They get different prices.
5915. There is very little contract work done outside the harvesting? Most of the cane is planted by contract.
5916. *By Mr. Nielson*: What do they pay for that on ploughed land? I could not say for certain. That was a thing I never took much interest in.
5917. You have never done any? Not for many years. In olden times we used to get a penny a hole for planting.
5918. *By Mr. Paget*: I suppose the plough has got into the land since then? Yes.
5919. *By the Chairman*: A witness told us to-day that he thought men would resent the idea of attempting to encourage them to settle on the land—Do you think it would be too much like wet-nursing them? I do not. The inducement they offer us in New South Wales is to put an upset price of £4 or £6 an acre on the land, and you have to stick on it for ten years; if you are off for ten minutes, they fine you £2, and stick another year on to you.
5920. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know anything about the homestead conditions in Queensland? No. I have heard about them, but I have never seen them in operation.
5921. Do you think that, if men from your part could get land on easy terms, they would come and settle here? Most decidedly, provided the land was worth taking up.

EDWARD SWAYNE, further examined:

5922. *By the Chairman*: You want to be re-examined on some point? Yes. A Mr. Tait, representing the Sugar Workers' Union, gave evidence, and he did not seem quite clear as to whether the conference between the Farmers' Association and the union was authorised to deal finally with the rates. It was clearly understood on our side that we were meeting men who were authorised to come to a definite understanding. E. Swayne.
5923. *By Mr. Paget*: That is with respect to the cutting rates in this district? Yes. 18 April, 1906.
5924. *By the Chairman*: At the time you thought you were dealing with men who had power to come to a definite decision? Yes.
5925. You are inclined to doubt that, after hearing what Mr. Tait said? Mr. Tait acknowledged he was not present, and that he is not well seized of the proceedings, and he seemed rather doubtful about it.
5926. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you know that a Mr. Lunny said the same thing this morning? No.
5927. He said that he understood the delegates from the Sugar Workers' Union were not authorised to make any definite arrangement, and that the rates had to be confirmed by the union? Our association is certainly not aware of that.

E. Swayne. 5928. *By the Chairman:* Well, I would urge your association to communicate with the union so as to have the thing settled? That is, if they officially inform us that the rates are not definitely settled. We understood from them that they were.

18 April, 1906. 5929. *By Mr. Nielson:* Perhaps they have to hold a meeting to formally ratify the action of their delegates? I should like to point out that we consider the daily wages the equivalent of 7s. a day, because we estimate the food to come to 2s. a day. I missed one or two points yesterday in giving my reasons for believing that there will be a scarcity of white labour after the deportation of the kanakas. Out of a crop in this district last year of about 300,000 tons of cane only about 139,000 tons were harvested by white labour. That shows that there is a very big gap to be filled up soon by additional white labour. Then, again, in the North, up to the season before last, out of 50,000 tons of sugar in No. 1 district—that is, from the Burdekin North—only 4,000 tons were made from white-grown cane, or not 1 ton in 12, so that there is a very big gap to be filled up there within a very short time.

5930. *By Mr. Paget:* Seven-eighths of the labour in that district has to be filled up? Yes. I am afraid those figures show that there is likely to be a very great scarcity of labour.

5931. I suppose you are aware that the whole of the coloured labour in the North is not kanaka labour? Quite so; but at the same time it has been their mainstay.

5932. Have you any idea how many South Sea Islanders there are in No. 1 district? Not being my own district, I have not got the figures at my finger ends; but what concerns one district concerns another, and when I was going into the question of the outlook with regard to the supply of labour, it seemed desirable that I should make myself acquainted with the shortage that will have to be made up.

5933. Assuming that there are about 4,000 Pacific Islanders at present employed in No. 1 district, are you still of opinion that it will be difficult to supply their place with white labour? I think so. At one period during the last crushing season the general experience was that there was no surplus labour when suitable men were wanted.

5934. In this district? Yes. So far as we can see, there is no source from which we can make good this large number required. There were many men here last year who this year have gone out West because of the good seasons there.

5935. Did you not hear a witness say this morning that the men wanted in this district would be well supplied by the 1,000 unemployed in the South? No, I did not hear that. At any rate, I think the figures mentioned show that there is room for a very much larger number than that.

5936. Yes; but what we desire to get is suggestions as to the best method of filling the gap that will exist next year? Well, of course I have already mentioned that the opinion we hold is that it is desirable to encourage immigration from Europe.

5938. On the other hand, did you hear Mr. Barlow give his evidence just now? Yes.

5939. Would it not be advisable for the growers in this district to advertise the conditions in this district in the papers of New South Wales northern districts, and try to attract some of these eminently desirable men? No doubt they will. There will be a loss if there is not sufficient labour.

5940. *By Mr. Nielson:* Mr. Barlow is here representing his district; do you not think it would be well if you or your association took him in hand, and gave him the information he wanted, and showed him a good average field? I have made a note of that. Then in the near future, if our expectations are filled, we shall have to consider the question of exportation. If everything goes on all right, we shall more than supply the local market.

5941. *By the Chairman:* That has nothing to do with us now? No; it has nothing to do with this Commission.

5942. *By Mr. Nielson:* One man tells us there will be no sugar at all, and another witness tells us that there will be far more than Australia can consume? That is what I am alluding to, and it is important to those connected with the industry.

5943. *By Mr. Paget:* It would be advisable for the canegrowers to approach the Federal Parliament to give them an export bounty when that comes to pass? We shall be shut out by the Brussels Convention.

5944. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything else you wish to say? Inquiries seem to show that if the new system is a success, there is no doubt we shall be able to supply our local market; but it will be a success principally from Mackay South, and even in this district there may be a restriction in areas. The hill scrub will be difficult to work under the new system, and planting in the crushing season will be almost impossible owing to the scarcity of labour, because the cold wet land which we used to plant in March and April will go out of cultivation. There is a grave risk of that. There is a large quantity of land that is too wet to plant in March and April, and too cold to plant during May, June, and July. Then when August comes, you are in the thick of the crushing, and there is no labour available.

5945. *By Mr. Paget:* Would that not tend to put off this fear of over-production? I have heard that there is a possibility of a large increase in the Southern districts.

Mr. Nielson: The areas of land there are very limited. You need not worry about that.

FREDERICK CHARLES MACNISH, Solicitor, examined:

F. C. Macnish. 5946. *By the Chairman:* I believe you are here representing the Mackay Chamber of Commerce? Yes.

18 April, 1906. 5947. Will you just let us know what you think it is desirable for us to hear? I have just a few suggestions to make.

Witness then handed in the following statement:—

(1.) The State Government should co-operate with the Federal Government with a view to the solution of the labour question by providing land grants to all labourers, whether from within or without the Commonwealth, who comply with certain prescribed conditions. Amongst the conditions suggested is fulfilment of a contract or contracts extending in the aggregate over a term of three years, involving service during, say, any five or six months in each year, whereof three months shall be during the crushing season.

(2.) The land grant should not exceed, say, 50 acres.

(3.) That districts should be specially proclaimed within which the land grants should be available.

(4.) That such districts should be as near as possible to the sugar districts, and should be so selected as to ensure the labourers being able to obtain as large an area of good agricultural land as

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possible, e.g.: At Mackay—(a) In addition to such Crown lands as may be available there are considerable areas held in large blocks that could be resumed at a fair valuation and utilised for land grants; (b) The Government are at present considering the advisableness of opening a road over the Eungella Ranges, where considerable tracts of good agricultural land are said to be available. If the facts are as stated, that would be a suitable district to reserve for the 50-acre blocks for the Mackay districts for the following reasons:—

- (a) The land is situated on the mountains and within a few hours' reach of Mackay.
- (b) The climate is temperate and bracing, and perhaps as good as could be found in Queensland.
- (c) Maize, onions, potatoes, and fruits, &c., could be grown in profusion.
- (d) The change of climate from the sugar lands to the mountain lands would be of material advantage to the labourer from a health point of view.
- (5.) The following conditions to be attached to the grants are suggested for consideration:—
 - (a) Area not to exceed 50 acres.
 - (b) That they be available immediately the contract of hiring is entered into.
 - (c) That during the first three years the selector be required to reside personally on the selection for one month in each year.
 - (d) That during the next two years he be required to reside personally on the selection for three months in each year.
 - (e) That on complying with the above conditions of residence he be entitled to a deed of grant of the land unless the selection has been forfeited on any of the grounds hereinafter specified.
 - (f) That the selections be liable to forfeiture—
 - (i.) For breach of any of the above conditions.
 - (ii.) If the selector should fail to carry out his contract for work, or if, in respect of such contract, there should be, say, two convictions recorded against him under the "*Master and Servants Act of 1861*."
 - (iii.) For such other reasons as might be deemed proper.
 - (g) Any contract for sale of the grant made prior to the acquisition of the freehold to be void, and pending the acquisition of the freehold the selector's interest in the land not to be liable to be attached for debt.
- (6.) That all contracts should be registered with the district Labour Bureau.
- (7.) That the contract may be cancelled by the employer and labourer by mutual consent upon the registration of the cancellation.
- (8.) That provided the labourer enters into a fresh contract with another employer within a period of, say, six months from such cancellation, his land grant shall not be prejudiced by such cancellation—that is to say, the prescribed term of three years could be made up by the aggregate term of two or more contracts.
- (9.) Amongst other advantages the land grants would have the following:—
 - (a) The labourer would be able during the slack season to devote his time to the improvement of his block, and would be able to gradually turn the same to profitable account, and at the end of the five years should derive therefrom a substantial income.
 - (b) The surplus of the money earned and the experience in agriculture acquired during the crushing seasons would be of material assistance in bringing the blocks to a productive state.
 - (c) They would operate as a retaining influence against strikes.
 - (d) The provisions of the Agricultural Land Bank could be availed of by the selector to enable him to develop the selection.
- (10.) That the functions of the Labour Bureau be extended so as to ensure—
 - (a) A precise knowledge of the annual labour requirements of the respective sugar districts.
 - (b) A precise knowledge of the labour likely to be available to meet such requirements.
 - (c) The most favourable terms for the transport of the labour at the most convenient times to the respective districts.
 - (d) The registration of all agreements to which land grants are incident, and notification of the cancellation of such agreements.

NOTE.—It is suggested that it might be found practicable to ensure the registration of all written agreements for terms of, say, three months and upwards. In such an event the statistics of the department regarding the labour available and required could be fairly easily made up.

- (e) Such other facilities as might be found of advantage to the employers and labourers.

5948. *By the Chairman:* Have you anything further to add? The idea is that waste land, or lands not at present utilised, should be put into use in the way of land grants. It does not seem to me that it will cost the State anything to set aside these areas. I suggest that they should be opened as workmen's homesteads, and they should be proclaimed as near as possible to the sugar districts. There is no doubt at all that it would be a great inducement for men to take them up for a term of three years—to undertake agricultural work in the sugar industry, in view of the fact that they ought, at the end of that time, to devote their spare time in the off season to place a 50-acre block in such a condition that it would practically keep them going. If the 50-acre block was in the vicinity of a sugar district, even when it became productive, they would still be able to devote a certain portion of their time to the crushing.

5949. Would you be able to get a considerable area of Crown lands in the vicinity of Mackay? I should say so, probably on this side of the range. There is no doubt on that point. For instance, there is the Silent Grove land. I understand the Government are going to open it. That is 6,000 acres to start with, and it is first-class agricultural land.

5950. *By the Chairman:* We heard something about that yesterday? That is one area. There is also the land over the range. No practicable road has obtained there for some time, still, with the prospect of a road going there, no doubt it would be of some value for the purpose of development. Then you would require a road. In addition to that there are large quantities of land in this district which could be resumed and cut up into blocks.

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5951. Reserves? Not necessarily reserves, but they are in private hands.
5952. *By Mr. Nielson*: As these men are so anxious to get labourers, they might cut the land up themselves? They are owned by people who are not growing cane at the present time. They would not cut them up for the benefit of other growers.
5953. I would be sorry to recommend to anyone what would be a bad investment to the bank? I would not call these lands a bad investment at all. Cut up into 50-acre blocks they would soon become a good investment.
5954. Did it not strike you that the investment would not be as good as you think, owing to the facilities obtaining where a man can select a homestead of the same area without binding himself to work for three years? The conditions are different in both cases. I suggest that he should only have to reside on the land for a month in the year for the first three years, and for a longer term for the next two years. I suggest that he should have absolute freedom to leave it entirely during the crushing season, for instance.
5955. You are aware that he can do that now? Under certain conditions, he can on an area of 160 acres.
5956. But that is only the maximum area for a homestead? Undoubtedly. He could take up a smaller area, but he would require to be continuously resident.
5957. You know that all over Queensland homestead selectors get exemption to go away and work? I do not think that is generally known.
5958. They can get a permit, and go away to work for five or six months? If the permit was given as a matter of right, it would meet the difficulty.
5959. *By Mr. Paget*: It is not given as a matter of right? I fancy not.
5960. *By Mr. Nielson*: I suppose the chief feature of your recommendation is a recognition that settlement on the land is the best inducement to get labour into the district? Yes. I think that the best inducement is to provide land in small areas on which to settle labourers exclusively. At the present time, if a block of land is thrown open to selection, it may be taken up by anyone, whether he is going to work in the sugar industry as a labourer or not. The present difficulty is the labour difficulty, and not the grower difficulty at all. The grower's difficulty is that he is afraid he may not get labour. If the State hold out the inducement that a man can secure a small freehold after putting in a certain time in the sugar industry and a short period of residence on his homestead, it will be a very great inducement to men to settle down, whilst it will cost the State very little.
5961. Do you not think that, if the State opened up a good tract of land to homestead selection in reasonable areas, and you got the people into the district, that would just about satisfy your requirements? No. I think the land would probably be taken up, but not by men who would be bound to devote a certain amount of time to working in connection with the sugar industry.
5962. *By the Chairman*: You have made it very clear, but I am not sure that it is practicable? It is worth trying. You gentlemen are trying to discover something that will assist in the solution of the difficulty. I do not put this forward as the solution at all, but as an assistance in that direction. I do not think you will find any single scheme that will meet the difficulty at every point.
5963. Where are these men to come from? I suggest anywhere within or without the Commonwealth. If these land grants were advertised in the old country through the Agent General's office as attaching to contracts that can be made with the approval of the Federal Minister, together with the form of contract and the scale of wages, you would probably get a large number of applicants.
5964. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know the very liberal conditions under which men in the old country can select land in Queensland now? But those conditions will not bind them to labour in the industry.
5965. Quite so; but they are far more liberal than what you suggest, and we shall see directly whether they will avail themselves of those conditions? They can only select under the existing Land Acts.
5966. Under the last Land Act they can select land in Queensland before they leave the old country; and, if they do not like it after they have been on the land for a certain time, they can get their money back with interest added? That will not assist the sugar industry. I think that under my scheme, you will get a number of immigrants from the old country, and a number within the Commonwealth. If it only resulted in getting 1,000 towards the 6,000 or 8,000 who may be required, it will be so much towards solving the difficulty.
5967. *By the Chairman*: I have no doubt there is a good deal in it, when one comes to think it out—Have the Chamber of Commerce gone into the question of the deportation of the kanakas? I am afraid that is beyond their jurisdiction.
5968. *By Mr. Nielson*: Or their inclination? I do not know much about their inclination; but their inclination, of course, is to prevent any serious injury to the industry by hasty and unconsidered action.

HENRY BOWTEN BLACK, Journalist, examined:

H. B. Black. 5969. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A journalist.

5970. What points do you wish to give evidence upon? The matter of the deportation of the 6,000 kanakas, and the necessity of supplying labour to take their place.

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5971. *By Mr. Paget*: You are appearing as a representative of the Chamber of Commerce? Yes.

5972. *By the Chairman*: What have you to say about the deportation of the kanakas? We are of the opinion that the sudden removal of 6,000 kanakas from the industry must create a very serious gap which cannot be readily filled. We are in favour of immigration. We are also in favour of the deportation of the kanakas being carried out gradually. The time to make arrangements is so short that the country is at a very great disadvantage and in a great difficulty. This Commission should have sat twelve months ago instead of being appointed at the very last moment; and the difficulty which must arise on the 1st January next is that you have to get rid of 6,000 people, but that they cannot be deported for the first three months of the year on account of the hurricane season, and so transport arrangements can scarcely be ready to deal with them twelve months hence. The difficulty we see facing us is that the kanakas will be deterred from making a living after 1st January next. I do not think the system of herding them together that has been suggested by Mr. Horubrook will be very effective; but if they are not herded together, they will be scattered over the country, and, having no means of living beyond the few pounds they may have saved between this and then, there is very grave risk of danger to the community. For that reason we think it would be very advisable that some amendment of the Act should be made providing for getting rid of them as fast as it can be done, and provided that they are allowed to earn a

living until the time for deportation takes place. We are not opposing the deportation at all, but what we want is that it shall be carried out in a proper and humane manner as quickly as possible. If these steps, which Mr. Sage and Bishop Frodsham are going to take, are going to be of any use, then let them be taken at once, so that when the time comes when they are to be got rid of they can be got rid of in a decent manner. The idea of putting 5,000 men on four or five big steamers and sending them down there will mean destruction to a large number. We do not desire it to be said that the Act was a bad one. We wish the Commonwealth to carry it out in a way that will reflect credit on the Commonwealth rather than discredit. It may be only a matter of the administration of the Act, but it should be carried out carefully and quickly.

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5973. What number would you suggest should be sent away each quarter? Those who are willing to go should be sent away as quickly as possible. Mr. Sage spoke of a number who wished to remain. If the kanakas want to go, then the two parties are agreed, and there ought to be no difficulty in attaining the desired end. There are a certain number who will be left in Australia. I think it is generally understood that they will not be touched at all until they express a wish to go. But they only number a few hundreds.

5974. In suggesting an amendment to the existing law, how far would you go in selecting a minimum number to go away? They ought all to be got rid of by the end of next year.

5975. *By Mr. Nielson:* How would you pick the "boys" who are to go? You would really want some transport commission or officer appointed by the State or Commonwealth Government to deal with it.

5976. In Mackay you have 800 kanakas; suppose 40 per cent. were to go in the next four months, how are you going to pick out the individual men and say that they have to go? They would have to go when they were told.

5977. Pick out who you like? An executive officer in charge of the transport would say, "Here are forty Tanna men. You will all go together." Then he would pick sixty from another island, and say that they would have to go. They would have to be ready by a certain day.

5978. Would you endeavour to send them away in groups according to the islands to which they belonged? I have had no personal experience with kanakas for many years, but I should say that could be left to the discretion of the officer here who had the transport arrangements under his control.

5979. *By the Chairman:* With the understanding that they must all be gone by the 31st of December, 1907? I do not fix a date, but they should all be got rid of by that time, and sooner, if you like, but they could not be all got rid of in January next.

5980. None of us think that? The moment that the 1st of January comes, the men who are willing to go should be allowed to go.

5981. How would you suggest that these men should be handled after 31st December next? I would suggest that they be allowed to re-engage for six months.

5982. With the understanding that they must be all gone by the end of the year? Yes.

5983. Have you anything else to say? I would like to emphasise the opinion of other gentlemen with regard to the Labour Bureau. It is a difficult thing to deal with. I quite recognise the feeling of distaste. It is human nature. I think the bureau here could be established so as to work in conjunction with every part of Queensland. There should be a set of smart bureaux all working together so that the labour could be distributed properly.

5984. That is supposed to be the position now? But it is not done.

5985. We have a list here of all the bureaux in Queensland? They are not sufficiently popularised.

5986. *By Mr. Paget:* There are 120 different places? I might mention that there was an attempt made two years ago to start a private bureau independent of the Government establishment. A number of gentlemen decided that some means could be taken to bring employer and employee together. Some money was spent on it, but neither the men nor the employers would join in, and the man who started it had to pay the expenses out of his own pocket. It wants someone to organise something of that sort.

5987. Why did it fail? I do not know, except that the men would not go to the agent and the employers would not send to the agent.

5988. Do you not think that if the employers made the officer in charge of the bureau their agent to enter into agreements with the men, it might result in some good? Then the employer would have to be responsible for his wages for a day if he did not employ him.

5989. Domestic servants are engaged in that way, and men are not in a worse position than that? The employer does not go to the bureau, and the workmen do not go to the bureau either. If there were some central place chosen in the town, and a board hung on it in a handy place, and it became a common thing to post information on it, then possibly it might be an initiative step in getting the two classes together. There is always an antagonism between the employers and the labour, but it would be done away with a lot by an effective bureau.

FREDERICK CHARLES MACNISH, Solicitor, further examined:

5990. *By the Chairman:* You wish to add something? Yes; it occurred to me, when Mr. Black was giving evidence, that the difficulty of deportation might be got over by giving the Minister power to proclaim as ready to leave a certain proportion of the "boys" in each district either quarterly or annually, as he thought fit, and then the proportion of "boys" should be divided up amongst the employers in proportion to the number of "boys" they employed.

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5991. What about the tenants? They would have to be dealt with separately. We are talking of those actually employed now. The Minister would decide, say, that one-fourth of them must leave at the end of six months. Say a grower employed twelve men, then, at the end of six months, he would employ three. That would enable him, with the assistance of other people, to carry on the plantation by gradually reducing them.

5992. Who would select them? If the employer did not decide on the three men, then some arbitrary power must be vested in a local agent. There must be some arbitrary power vested somewhere to carry out these proposals. I am inclined to think that you would gradually get over the difficulty in that way.

5993. Would not that necessitate fresh legislation? Yes; it would require an amendment of the Act so as to give the Minister power to proclaim the districts. He would proclaim a certain proportion up North

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and a similar proportion at Mackay on the reports of his responsible officers. The officer here would report that it was possible to get rid of 200 "boys" at the end of six months. If the Minister was satisfied that the officer was a capable man he would act on that report, and he would expect the officer to be able to carry it out at the end of six months. I do not see how you can fix any limit. If you place an absolute limit of two years you will find there are a considerable number of "boys" to be dealt with then. The deportation is clearly going to be carried out gradually. Until the law says otherwise it will be impracticable to do it except in a careful way.

5994. *By Mr. Paget*: What is to become of the kanakas? He will be employed, but he will be liable to be deported at six months' notice. The plantations will then know that they have to fill a gap at the end of six months. At present there is no security whatever. At present the Legislature proposes that on such-and-such a day all these "boys" shall knock off work, and then a huge expense will be incurred. By the other method you will maintain the system, but you give them an opportunity of subdividing.

5995. They have had three or four years to set about doing it, but they never did it, so do you think they will do it in the future? The possibility is that they will subdivide in three or four years.

5996. Has there been any subdivision? Yes, in this district the gradual tendency is to subdivide. It was all large plantations here at one time, but now four-fifths are subdivided. Take The Palms, and Meadowlands, and Farleigh. All the plantations are being subdivided and sold as farms. You could not get purchasers all of a sudden unless the Government were prepared to dump down 300 or 400 immigrants with £300 or £400 in their pockets. You may decide by law that a thing shall be done, but it is an entirely different matter to do it, and the only rational thing is to do it gradually. If the whole of the kanakas were to remain here for four or five years, that is neither here nor there in the life of the nation, so long as its ultimate object is going to be attained. In two or three years you would have got rid of the kanakas and would have settled the plantations with white growers. The one system seems to me to court destruction, and the other to ensure success.

5997. *By Mr. Nielson*: You are aware that those who are most affected have made absolutely no endeavour to subdivide, or to enter into other arrangements? You could not point to a plantation in this district where that is so. In every instance the plantations are being gradually subdivided. I know that of my own experience, through seeing the transfers going through. The Palms is one of the largest plantations here—they are selling at the present time, and in the meantime they are keeping the mill going.

5998. Are they not leasing their land? Leasing and selling. Meadowlands is doing the same. I do not know about Palmyra, but they have sold some there. But it is only a small place. Farleigh is the same and is now mostly in farms.

5999. *By Mr. Paget*: There are only three large plantations in the district now? I do not think there is a single large plantation left that is not partially in the course of purchase by small growers. However, I suggest that the simplest method is to deal with it by proclamation.

EDWARD MARTIN, Sub-Inspector of Police, examined:

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6000. *By the Chairman*: What are you? Sub-inspector of police.

6001. How long have you been in Mackay? Seven and a-half years.

6002. You are aware that at the end of this year it will not be lawful to employ Pacific Islanders, and there will be a great many of them idle and walking about—Do you think there will be any risk of disturbances being generated among them? I certainly think that if they are all turned loose there will be a considerable amount of trouble, unless they are kept under proper control.

6003. Will the trouble amount to danger of loss of life, or injury to property? I think so.

6004. *By Mr. Paget*: Why do you say that—is it because of the South Sea Islanders? No. I look upon the South Sea Islander as one of the most peaceful subjects we have under proper control. But if you turn 900 men loose they will all drift into the town, where they will not be under any control, unless that of the police, and they will be a source of considerable danger. I believe they can be dealt with.

6005. *By the Chairman*: Can you suggest a means of dealing with them? I believe that the islanders are capable of being kept under control by a proper officer, and divided into three or four camps, instead of, as during the last seven years, allowing them to collect and live in places like Chinatown. If they were put in a place like the immigration quarters, and kept there under proper control, they could be kept in order easily, and kept apart from the other coloured people.

6006. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you any idea as to the number of other coloured aliens camped in this town? There are 400 or 500.

6007. Permanently living in the town? No, in the district.

6008. But how many permanently reside in the town, where you expect the danger? They are in and out. There may be a great number here to-day or this week, and many of them may be out in the country next week. There are probably 150 or 200 Chinese; then we have Cingalese, Malays, Japanese, and so on.

6009. Do they not constitute a danger to the peace of the town? Yes, they would be a considerable danger amongst the Pacific Islanders. If you leave the islander to himself, there is not much danger; but with these other coloured people amongst them they would be a decided danger.

6010. *By the Chairman*: Then you think that, if the necessity arose, provision ought to be made for dividing them up into three or four camps about the town, putting each camp under an officer who is used to dealing with that class of man? Yes. I would keep as many islanders out of town as possible. I would allow none of them to remain about Chinatown, as they are at present and have been. I would compel them to camp at the other end of the town.

6011. The question is whether we can compel them? I have found the islanders are like a flock of sheep. An officer who has proper control of them can do what he likes with them.

6012. Do you not think that some of them will then awake to the fact that no man has any control over them after they are out of their agreements? There are several who have been here for a number of years who have taken up the vices of the white men and the other coloured people and not their virtues. There might be some little difficulty with them, but I have never experienced any difficulty with the islanders myself.

6013. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would it not be possible, instead of removing the islanders from Chinatown, to move Chinatown from the islanders? It would be a very good thing if Chinatown could be removed.

6014. Have they any special licenses up here? I do not know that it would be possible unless the municipal authorities could do it. When I first came here I found Chinatown a source of danger from the health point of view, as it was in a filthy condition. It is situated on low land, many of the huts were down below the surface of the ground, and the drainage from the yards was flowing under where the Chinese were living. The sanitary arrangements were particularly bad; probably there were fifty or sixty Chinese going into one back yard. A number of the gentlemen connected with the Board of Health of Mackay visited Chinatown in company with the Government health officer and me, and considerable improvements were made. The question of removing the coloured people to a reserve arose then, but it has since fizzled out. This reserve is on the bank of a creek close to the Nebo road. I found a difficulty in dealing with them through the houses running in all ways without any proper back yards or any way of getting at the Chinese. I wanted to get at them, particularly with regard to gambling, but I found it was almost an utter impossibility owing to the way they were all huddled together.

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6015. *By Mr. Nielson*: I suppose the vested interests were too strong for you? I suppose so. The place has been somewhat improved since I came here.

6016. Is there any municipal by-law against the keeping of bawdy houses? Not in Mackay.

6017. Has not the Contagious Diseases Act been extended to Mackay? It has never been enforced.

6018. In some municipalities they have a by-law which keeps them off the municipal boundary; is there no such by-law here? I do not think so. I think the council has the power to compel the owner of any property to remove prostitutes from off his property.

6019. *By Mr. Paget*: Are there any such places existing in this town? There are brothels in Chinatown, and in other parts of the town, just the same as there are in other towns. There are a number of Japanese women here.

6020. In view of the statement which you have made with respect to the danger that might ensue from the herding of a large number of kanakas in the town at the end of this year, would you be inclined to submit some scheme for the proper control of these people to the Commission? I think the officer here, Mr. Hornbrook—

6021. Would you be allowed to submit any scheme under the police regulations? I do not mind verbally answering questions and making suggestions.

6022. You have already made some suggestions? If Mr. Hornbrook, or whoever the officer is at the head of affairs, were assisted by the police, I quite believe that it would be possible to get the islanders into camps as was suggested to-day by Mr. Hornbrook. We could have one camp, say, at Homebush, one at The Palms or some other place, and another camp in town. The islanders could be kept there under the control of Mr. Hornbrook, assisted by the police. I do not think there would be a great deal of difficulty, so long as they were provided with food and tobacco, for the time being at any rate. The danger would be in letting 800 islanders loose in the district.

6023. And allowing them to go where they liked? Yes; the danger lies there.

6024. The same danger would arise if 900 of any race were thrown idle? Yes; any of the coloured races, or the white people either, for that matter. There is a large amount of danger from the persons at the back of these islanders—persons who put mischief into their minds, particularly coloured people and a low class of whites who live about here and will not work. I look for danger in that direction. We have in Mackay a number of Malays and Cingalese, who live largely on the kanakas. They supply him with liquor. They run fruit shops as a blind, and it is a difficult matter to get at them under the Vagrant Act. We have cleared a great many out from time to time, but these are the men who do the most harm.

6025. *By the Chairman*: These are the men to be guarded against? Yes.

6026. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you ever had any conversation with the islanders regarding their return home? I think it would be better to allow them to drift away gradually than to take them away in large numbers. I believe there are a large number in the district who are willing to go home if arrangements can be made to take them away.

6027. *By Mr. Paget*: You mean when their agreements terminate? There are thirty or forty about now. The islanders told me that they would like to get away, but they have to pay their passage between here and Bundaberg. I believe that 200 or 300 islanders will get away from this district if there is any means to get them away.

6028. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think that in the last six months there were islanders who would have gone home if there had been facilities for taking them away? Yes; there was a lot about the district.

6029. *By Mr. Paget*: If there were a daily steamer from Mackay to the islands they would go? No, not a daily steamer; but there should be some place they could go to and be looked after.

6030. The difficulty is that the islander changes his mind so often—one week he says he will go, and the next he changes his mind and says he will stay? They complain to me, and say that they would like to get away to their own country, and they say there are plenty of others in the district of the same way of thinking.

DOUGLAS RANNIE, Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders, examined:

D. Rannie.

6031. *By the Chairman*: You are Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders at Mackay? Yes.

6032. How long have you had experience of this business? Twenty-two years.

6033. You also acted as Government agent for many years in connection with the recruiting of Pacific Islanders? Yes; for nine years.

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6034. How long is it since you were at the islands? Six years.

6035. You have prepared a statement, in which you embody your views of the position? Yes.

The Chairman: Very well; we will include it as evidence.

The statement handed in by the witness was as follows:—

The many obstacles accruing in the way of a sudden deportation of a large number of kanakas to their original homes, and the undoubted hardships it would inflict on many of them, could, I think, be obviated by a gradual deportation, but at a considerably accelerated rate than at present.

For many years islanders have come and returned to their homes in large numbers, and although the reports of the murder of return islanders have frequently come to hand, many intended massacres have been frustrated through the designed victims electing to recruit again for Queensland before

D. Rennie. disembarking, having been warned by some friendly-inclined countryman before approaching their particular landing place. But under the present circumstances the islanders have not the same alternative.

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This, although one of the gravest obstacles, can, with the others, I believe, as far as the landing of the returns is concerned, be easily overcome.

The obstacles I refer to are as follows:—

1. The danger of being murdered after landing;
2. The separation of married couples, where man and woman belong to different islands;
3. Converts to Christianity, and children lapsing into heathenism;
4. The general food supply.

The ordinary return of islanders is not affected by these obstacles, and their landing may be proceeded with as usual. In 1902 as many as 1,775, and in 1903 1,014, were landed without any apparent hardship or trouble; but most of these islanders, I believe, were fairly well conversant with the state of affairs and the surroundings to which they were returning. But in respect to the others who are doubtful about their reception, and those who absolutely refuse to return to their own islands, as well as mixed married couples and parents with Queensland-born children, I am confident that they can be provided for close to their old homes, without hardship to themselves, and at a minimum of expense.

Referring in the first place to the Solomon Islanders, of whom we have the largest number to be deported, I would suggest that a suitable piece of land be acquired, upon which those islanders under consideration could be landed, and eventually settled down in comfortable and happy homes. Such a place I have in view—namely, the west coast of Gaudalcanar.

Here we have a fine stretch of rich, beautiful, and fertile country of many thousands of acres, well watered, with ever flowing streams running down from the lakes in the mountains, and extending parallel with the coast from Wanderer Bay to Cape Esperance, upwards of 40 miles. The coast line is indented with a number of fine bays and safe harbours; and although this magnificent tract of country is capable of supporting a population of many thousands, it is at present very sparsely inhabited.

The dearth of population on this particular part of the coast is mainly due to the raids made on the former inhabitants by the head-hunters from the Western Isles, and their own neighbours from Savo, and their countrymen from the "weather side."

The innumerable little bays and inlets gave the wild and savage foragers secure retreats at night for their war-canoes, with which they would swoop down at dawn upon some unfortunate and unsuspecting village.

In consequence of these forays, the majority of those who were not killed or taken captive either migrated and identified themselves with the tribes on the "weather side," or took refuge in the high lands and fastnesses in the mountains. And the few who remained, I believe, became vassals of the chiefs of Savo, and were thus enabled to enjoy their protection. Now, happily, all that internecine war, with its attendant raids and forays, has been abolished in this part of the group, the Resident Commissioner having the natives well in hand, and his influence has been conducive of great good.

As return islanders could land here without any fear of any personal violence or bodily harm, the first thing to turn attention to would be the food supply. As the first batch to land would be comparatively small, little difficulty would be found in providing for them, as a plentiful supply of yams, taro, bread fruit, plantains, bananas, coconuts, and various other nuts, besides a large variety of indigenous fruits, could easily be obtained at very small cost from the villages along the coast. The waters also in this locality abound with fish. There should at no time be any shortage or lack of food, as the present inhabitants, though few as I say, not only grow ample for themselves, but can well afford to supply all the returns who might be landed there from Queensland during the next eighteen months; and, if they expected a bigger demand, they would very willingly plant a bigger supply. In the meantime our first landed returns would be progressing with their gardens and plantations.

As a central position and place of call for ships none could be better.

Even if a vessel had landed a batch of returns here, and then proceeded on her trip to land at other islands, and subsequently found that some of her returns dared not land at their destined passages or islands, it would be no hardship but quite convenient for the ship to return and land any of those unfortunately situated islanders at the settlement on the west coast of Gaudalcanar, as most vessels leaving the Solomon Group take their departure from Wanderer Bay, having filled up there with wood and water for the homeward trip, or the continuation of the voyage to the New Hebrides.

Returns electing to land at such a settlement need not think that they will be immured there for the rest of their natural lives, because, under the new condition of things, constant communication between one island and another is being kept up by traders and missionaries in many vessels of various sizes, so that when an islander, on receipt of information from friends at home, deems it safe enough to return there, he would have no difficulty in doing so, either by working his passage or paying some trifling emolument.

Meanwhile, the settlement would require to be under proper supervision and discipline, and every able adult would be required to contribute his fair share to the general maintenance of the community. Besides the care and attention required by the gardens and yam plantations, a vigorous planting of coconut-trees should be pursued, as the copra industry has a great future before it. As yet it is in its infancy. From the very outset the returns could start and do a good business in the copra trade, and would progress by leaps and bounds.

They could also engage in the bêche-de-mer and pearling, as well as the arrowroot industry, one from which some of the New Hebrides natives derive thousands of pounds per annum.

I need not enumerate at present the various occupations with which these islanders could occupy their time and attention, as there are quite a number of lucrative pursuits besides those I have mentioned which they might follow.

And I feel sure that, with due care and careful management, these return islanders would not only almost from the start form themselves into a self-supporting settlement, but they would gather together many of the former but scattered people of that locality about them, and soon bloom forth into a flourishing, industrious, and contented community; by example and precept, show themselves an object lesson to the tribes and peoples of the surrounding islands; and, instead of being a reproach to those who have no further need of them in a country where their labour has been the foundation of one of our

greatest industries, they will prove that the conditions under which they have lived in this State have taught them to appreciate the benefits of civilisation and caused them to lead higher and nobler lives.

Similar arrangements could be made in respect to islanders returning to the New Hebrides.

Excellent sites for settlement could be found on various parts of Santo or on Maibo (Aurora).

The island of Erromanga itself offers many inducements for the settlement of kanakas and their families.

Oranges, bananas, coconuts, and other fruits abound all over the island. Cattle thrive well; and the island is an ideal one on which to raise poultry. And as it is under four days' steam from Sydney, a ready market would always be found for their produce.

D. Rennie.

18 April, 1906.

(Marian.)

THURSDAY, 19 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT :

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) |

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. G. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

JAMES AUGUSTUS EDWARDS, Cane Farmer, examined :

6036. *By the Chairman* : What are you ? A cane farmer at Ben Venue, Marian.

6037. What is the area of your farm ? 1,259 acres.

6038. How much have you got under cane ? About 11½ acres.

6039. How much did you cut last year ? I cannot tell you from memory. I do not conduct the business personally; my sons do that.

6040. Did you use white or black labour ? I am using white labour now; but up to the last crushing I used purely black labour.

6041. Are you registered for the bonus ? Yes.

6042. Have you availed yourself of local labour, or are you getting it from the floating population ? Up till now it has been local labour mostly.

6043. What wages do you pay in the slack season for field work ? I have only young boys working at the present time. I am paying them 8s. and 10s. a week and their board.

6044. What work are they doing ? Cutting chaff.

6045. Are they doing any chipping ? The chipping and planting are all done.

6046. Have you done any chipping by white labour ? These boys did the chipping partly, and they laid the plants.

6047. You have not employed any mature men ? Not since the crushing.

6048. Do you anticipate having to employ any mature men in the future ? Yes.

6049. What do you think you will have to pay for chipping ? I do not need to employ any men for chipping until the crushing is over, and I do not know what the wages will be then.

6050. What do you think would be a fair wage for a good man ? £1 a week and his rations cooked.

6051. What do you anticipate having to pay for cutting ? I have let a contract for cutting my cane. The price is 6s. 6d. a ton to cut and cart it to the ramline. I am speaking of mountain cane now.

6052. What do you expect you will have to pay for the other cane ? Probably, we shall take it off ourselves.

6053. What do you think the difference amounts to between loading hill cane and cane grown on the levels ? Circumstances vary so much that it is impossible to lay down anything definite.

6054. What would the crop for which you are going to pay 6s. 6d. be worth if it were growing on level ground ? About 2s. 3d. a ton and 1s. a ton for loading, and me to cart it, which would be equal to another shilling.

6055. That would be 4s. 3d. ? That is about the average.

6056. What would be the average crop ? I think it will run about 25 tons to the acre—part of it will probably go 30 tons—that is plant cane.

6057. Do you anticipate having any trouble in getting labour this next year ? I do. I cannot see where it is to come from.

6058. Are you off the main road ? No; the main road runs right through my property.

6059. Then you will have a chance of getting what men are looking for work ? I have been troubled with swarms of "swaggies," whether they want work or not.

6060. The difficulty is to get good men ? Yes.

6061. What is the special subject on which you are desirous of addressing us ? I think a Commission like this should have been appointed long before any legislation was passed dealing with kanakas. The best way to overcome the trouble of deportation, if what I was told in town is correct, and the Act only applies to Queensland—

6062. *By Mr. Nielson* : It applies to the whole of Australia ? Then what I was going to say will not apply. I was going to suggest that they should be sent into New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia.

6063. It is a Federal Act, and applies to all Australia ? Then I was misinformed. I was under that impression myself. Another thing I should say would be an easy way to get out of it. At the present time they must be deported after 1906, and it is quite within their power to modify it. My suggestion is this: Let those who wish to employ kanakas do so at their own risk, and they will not get the bonus. Let the kanakas go back gradually to their islands, and let those who employ white labour have the bonus. The kanakas would die out, and the remainder would drift back to the islands, and they would all be gone in ten or twelve years. That would save the country a great deal of the expense which would result from deportation, and it would settle the question in a measure.

6064. *By Mr. Paget* : Would you allow those islanders to work without agreements ? Yes.

6065. Or continue to work under the present system ? No; without agreements.

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6066. Without any supervision? Yes; they came here under the protection of the British flag, and why should they be restricted?
6067. *By Mr. Nielson*: You would allow them to work in any industry or in any occupation, I suppose? No; I would restrict them to field labour, so that they would not compete with the white labourer.
6068. You would restrict them to tropical agriculture? No; to field labour. I would not allow them to use the plough.
6069. *By the Chairman*: Field manual labour? Yes; unskilled labour.
6070. *By Mr. Nielson*: You would restrict them to tropical agriculture? No; because there are numbers working in New South Wales, and if you restricted them to tropical agriculture they would have to come up and live in the tropics. You have to look at the thing in a feasible light, and see what you can do.
6071. *By the Chairman*: Can you think of any other suggestion that will be useful to us? The best thing will be for the different State Governments to take up the case and see if the kanakas can legally be deported.
6072. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think, if there is a chance of anything like that, that the kanakas will test it? They have no money to do it.
6073. Why should the Government pay? It is a case of the strong oppressing the weak, and they intend to make them go.
6074. *By Mr. Paget*: The position under the federal statute is that the islanders are to be deported, and 5,000 or 6,000 of these men are to be removed from working in the cane-fields; can you offer any suggestion as to how that labour can be replaced by white labour? Of course; import labourers from Europe.
6075. You favour immigration? Yes.
6076. *By the Chairman*: Would you favour indenting persons of European origin, or people of Anglo-Saxon origin only? I would favour indenting white men of any European origin.
6077. You would not bar the Italian? No. I would not put a bar on any white man who has a strong pair of arms, and is willing to work.
6078. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know there is nothing to prevent labourers being indentured at the present time, if you can satisfy the Government that you cannot obtain sufficient labour? What about the education test? Does it not apply?
6080. No? I thought it did.
6081. *By the Chairman*: The education test can be suspended at the will of the Minister, and if you can satisfy the Minister that there is not enough labour here you will get a permit—Did you not know that? No.
6082. *By Mr. Nielson*: It applies to any European but not to an Asiatic? Would it apply to Syria?
6083. I doubt it? Well, a man from Syria is of European extraction.
6084. *By the Chairman*: You would be in favour of that? Yes.
6085. Well, you can do it now; all you have to do is to persuade the Minister that there is a scarcity of labour? I would like to see it made law. The Minister should not have the power to say you may or you may not. Let it be the law of the land that either I myself or anyone else should have the power to indent these people without going cap in hand to any Minister.
6086. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you tell us anything as to whether there is likely to be a local labour supply? I think the local labour will be very short. The harvest, generally speaking, promises to be very abundant, and it is not likely people will come up here for the wages we can afford to give them, which are very little above what they get in New South Wales.
6087. The Commission has evidence before it that the Western workers prefer the cane-fields to the work in the Western parts of the State; a shearer told us that yesterday? Well, I, as a practical man, know perfectly well all about the West. I saw the West years ago and I know it better than a great many in Queensland at the present time. I know that Western men require to undergo an apprenticeship before they are any good to us in the cane-fields. They also want to undergo acclimatisation. It is all very well in the winter time, as this is a delightful climate in the winter, but in the summer it is altogether different.
6088. You are of opinion then that it is not likely that the shortage of labour in the cane-fields will be supplied by the Western workers? I do not believe it for a moment.
6089. *By Mr. Nielson*: We have also evidence that the men who travel round belonging to agricultural occupations prefer working in the cane-fields to harvesting on the Downs? I do not know what evidence you may have, but so far as Mackay is concerned any man who has followed agriculture can always get employment once he proves himself to be a good workman. That has been the case for years, and it was also the case in the bad times.
6090. Have you ever had a shortage? No; but after the black labour is withdrawn, and we are forced to do without the kanakas, then the shortage will come in. White labour is not employed on chipping, and planting and these other things. They have been done by black labour.
6091. *By Mr. Paget*: Was not 50 per cent. of the crop harvested by white labour in this district last year? I cannot tell you that. In years gone by it was not.
6092. We are talking about the present time? I have not been round the district, and I cannot tell you the percentage. I should imagine, at all events, that one-third of it was harvested by white labour. That is only my own opinion. I am not an authority on the subject.
6093. *By the Chairman*: Have you any hope that cane can be cultivated to advantage with white labour? My impression is that it will not after the Polynesian labour is withdrawn, because the other coloured labour is too expensive and too unreliable. As soon as the kanaka labour is withdrawn, Mackay and the Northern sugar districts will probably be extinct.
6094. You do not think it worth while to get white men? No; that is my opinion. I may be wrong, but I would like to fight it out to the bitter end.
6095. Do you think it would be of advantage to get the men settled within fifteen or twenty miles of Mackay? Yes; so far as Mackay is concerned.
6096. What area of land do you think a man should be given? Certainly not more than Mr. Fudge proposed—namely, 5 acres—for the reason that if a man gets more he will cultivate it, and that will make a scarcity of labour.

6097. *By Mr. Paget:* That is the scheme Mr. Fudge and I put before the Minister last year? Yes.
6098. *By the Chairman:* Can you always get a suitable building site on a 5-acre block? Yes; if you were a sensible man you would get a block that did suit you.
6099. If you cut up the land into 5-acre blocks, would each block have enough to build a house on? If you take the average of land in the Mackay district you would get a good piece of land.
6100. But you want a piece to build a house on? If such a scheme came forward I would not centralise these people in one place, but distribute them throughout the district here and there.
6101. You would have a number of settlements around the district? Yes.
6102. You think 5 acres is sufficient? Yes; if you give him more he becomes a "bloated canegrower," as they call them.
6103. But that would be something gained? But we want the planter to get the benefit of him.
6104. The Government give the land for the benefit of the planter? Yes; on condition that these men shall work on the plantations.
6105. And 5 acres would be enough, you think? Yes, I think so. In two years if he has more than that he might say he will not work on the plantations, and the Government would have made a bad bargain.
6106. *By Mr. Nielson:* That is, provided he left it? Provided he had a bigger area than 5 acres, and could make a living off it.
6107. Would that be a bad bargain? So far as the sugar industry is concerned, it would.
6108. Is it not your experience that every settler brings another? Yes; but I do not see how it applies to this case. If the Government want to go in for a scheme of village settlement, it is a different thing altogether; but it is supposed to help to get off the sugar crop.
6109. *By the Chairman:* If you put a man on 5 acres, he would be glad to earn a cheque for the first two years? I am a practical man, and I know that if he can get land without those conditions attached, and he finds that he can do better by putting up a "pub" or a store, and working the land "on his own," he will do so.
6110. You would not be in favour of these conditions? I would make it one of the conditions of his lease that he should work on the sugar plantations.
6111. *By Mr. Nielson:* Considering that men can select homesteads on easy terms, and have the opportunity of joining one of these groups with assistance from the Government, do you think men will settle down here on 5-acre blocks on the condition that they work in the sugar industry? I do. A man who takes up a selection of 160 acres generally has a little capital at his back.
6112. Suppose you have a selection of 40 acres only? He must have some means of living and cultivating his land, whereas, if he takes up a 5-acre block, he can put up a humpy; he does not want to cultivate it for the first few years, and he has a market for his labour at the mills.
6113. I belong to the Bundaberg district, and my experience there is that even the man with a 160-acre selection goes out to work far years? So they do here; but as soon as he has enough money to turn into a cane farmer himself, he becomes a grower of cane, and does not go out to work again.
6114. That is what we should aim at? I can give you an instance of one of our contractors who took up a homestead and worked in that way. Now he grows cane himself.
6115. If we could only get enough men of that class, the country would get on? It is not good for the country. We want men to take off our crops.
6116. Every additional grower you get is an improvement to the industry as a whole? At the present moment there is too much cane grown for the mills to take off. They are getting a new mill at Cattle Creek, and they are making Meadowlands into a co-operative company for the simple reason that there is a prospect of there being too much cane for the present mills, and a scarcity of labour.
6117. Still, the area under cane is increasing? That is because they are fools.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG, Cane Farmer, examined:

6118. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you appearing as a representative of the Marian branch of the Farmers' Association. As one of the representatives. Another should be here.
6119. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your farm? 154 acres of level forest land.
6120. How much of it is under cane? About 80 acres under cultivation—mostly cane.
6121. How much did you cut last year? 822 tons from 48 acres.
6122. By white or black labour? White labour.
6123. By contract or day work? The crop averaged 17 tons to the acre. I had two white men who never cut cane before, and they cut, trashed, and loaded it on to a horse wagon, in 123 days, for 3s. per ton. They made about 10s. a day. They were recent arrivals in Queensland. One man came from South Africa, and had never seen cane before.
6124. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you any idea what hours they worked? Being on contract I should think they worked ten or eleven hours a day for five days, and on Saturdays they only worked half a day as a rule.
6125. Were the ten or eleven hours a day exclusive of meal hours? Yes.
6126. They knocked off at 12 o'clock on Saturdays? Yes.
6127. *By the Chairman:* What time of the year did they commence? They commenced on 17th July, and the mill closed down on 18th December; the men, as well as I can remember, finishing six or seven days before that.
6128. Did they leave you then? Yes.
6129. Did they give you any information as to the character of the work or the money they made? They said it was rather hard work, but still they were satisfied. Being new arrivals, it might have been expected that they would not do the work as easily as seasoned hands.
6130. Did they tell you what they had been in the habit of doing before they came to Queensland? They had been reared on farms—one in Scotland and the other in Ireland.
6131. *By Mr. Nielson:* They must have worked pretty hard, because they averaged about 6½ tons a day between them? Besides that they cooked for themselves—found themselves, and had no help whatever except during the last five weeks, when I boarded them.
6132. *By the Chairman:* Do you expect them to return this year? I have no idea where one man is. The other has taken up a piece of land at Hatton on his own account.

J. A.
Edwards.

10 April, 1906.

R.
Armstrong.
19 April, 1906.

R.
Armstrong.
19 April, 1906.

6133. What area has he taken up? I think about 100 acres. My present crop will be considerably less than last year. I estimate it at about 650 tons—mostly ratoons. I have already made arrangements for taking it off by contract. I find a horse team and wagon, horse feed, stabling, and things like that. I am to pay the men 4s. 6d. per ton for the ratoons, and 4s. per ton for plant cane, cut, loaded, and delivered at the mill.

6134. *By Mr. Nielson:* How far is it from the mill? It is $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the far end of my farm to the mill.

6135. *By the Chairman:* None of your cane is trashed? They will have to trash it all. Two of the men are local men, and the third is a recently arrived nominated immigrant, who came to Queensland not quite six months ago.

6136. *By Mr. Paget:* Can you tell us anything further about the coming crop? If the men are unable to employ their full time in the cutting and carting, I have hoeing and other farm work for them to do at 6s. 6d. per day per man if they find themselves, and 5s. a day if I find them. We have not made arrangements yet about the food.

6137. How many hours a day would you expect them to work at day work? From half-past 6 until 12, and from 1 or half-past 1 till about 6—somewhere about ten hours a day. On Saturday we only work till 4 o'clock.

6138. You have made all your arrangements for the coming crop? Yes.

6139. Are you planting cane this year? About 35 acres for next year.

6140. With white labour? Yes; I have planted nearly 20 acres now.

6141. What are you paying white labourers for work during the off season—for hoeing or ploughing or general cultivation? £1 a week with quarters and food. Two of those are permanent hands, who will take off the crop and cut the cane. I have one other man—a ploughman—and a wagon man.

6142. *By the Chairman:* You give your permanent hands a chance to make a little money by taking a contract in the cutting season? Yes; one of those men I have had for six years.

6143. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you anticipate after this season having any difficulty in getting sufficient white labour to carry on your operations? I could not say just now. No doubt we will have some difficulty after the next crushing season, when all the people who harvested with kanakas in previous years take up white men.

6144. There are some 5,000 or 6,000 kanakas working in the canefields now, who federal legislation says are to be deported, and if they are to be deported there will be a serious gap in the labour supply? I am very doubtful about it, and I cannot say whether there will be a scarcity of white labour or not. It is doubtful if there will be a sufficient supply of white labour or not until all these men who had kanakas previously have their places filled with white labour. There is no doubt there will be a lot more men required then, but whether there will be enough available, is another question altogether.

6145. Then assuming there is not sufficient white labour available, how would you propose to supply the deficiency? If I were given a free hand I would get the men from Great Britain. We would get any amount of genuine farm labourers, but they do not seem to know that there is such a place as Queensland, and especially the sugar districts of Queensland.

6146. You have recently nominated farm labourers? Yes.

6147. On their arrival were they satisfied with what they saw? Yes, agreeably surprised.

6148. *By the Chairman:* From what part of the old country did they come? From the south of Ireland.

6149. And did they not hear of it before? No.

6150. *By Mr. Paget:* In the event of the labour supply proving short, would you care to nominate on your own account one or two friends again? Certainly, if I could.

6151. Do you think you would be doing those men an injustice by bringing them out? No; I would bring them out on the same terms as before, and I would not ask them to work at a cheap rate.

6152. *By the Chairman:* Do you think they would do quite as much as men who had been out here for a season? One man landed at Christmas time, and he worked for me until he met with an accident lately.

6153. It makes no appreciable difference to the new men? No, provided the man is healthy and is a general farm labourer.

6154. And takes care of himself? Yes, and is a sober man. I might also say, to bear out what I say about men being satisfied with the conditions, that this man intends to go into town next week and nominate another friend of his, and have him out here in August, if possible.

6155. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you heard anything about a scheme put forward for the purpose of settling sugar-workers on homestead areas? I have heard about it for the last seven or eight years. I have heard of different schemes. One was a scheme for establishing workers' homes.

6156. Would you approve of a scheme to try to induce men to settle down in the district? Yes; the proper class of men—not all sorts.

6157. What areas do you think would be suitable on reasonably good land? On reasonably good land a man could do anything on 20 acres. A man with no family would not want as much as a man with two or three grown-up children to help him.

6158. Do you think such a scheme, if carried to a successful conclusion, would be of assistance in solving the labour difficulty? Yes, provided that the right class of men are established in this place. That is a most important point. Another point would be to establish them close enough to the mills and farming centres. The trouble that would arise would be if they had to go to the outside country.

6159. *By the Chairman:* How far could a man be put, to be able to go home every Saturday night? It would be very hard to ask him to go more than 6 or 7 miles. The men in the mill here go home on Sundays, and one man lives on a selection 8 or 9 miles from here.

6160. He keeps a horse? He does not always keep a horse.

6161. He sometimes walks? Yes.

6162. *By Mr. Paget:* You think they should not be further than 8 or 9 miles? I would not ask a man to walk that far, though, as a matter of fact, some walk much further than that.

6163. Have you anything further to add? In different parts of Great Britain workers' cottages have been built and rented to the workers at a nominal rental.

6164. That lies within the scope of the private owner? No, the Government do it in England.

6165. Private owners have been doing it in Great Britain too? Yes, for centuries; but at present it is done by the Government.

6166. In connection with the price that you are paying for labour under white conditions, do you consider it necessary that the bounty should be continued to enable you to pay such a price? If the bounty was dropped and the conditions got back to what we had before the bounty commenced, we would have to shut up.

R.
Armstrong.
19 April, 1906.

6167. That is if you were thrown into competition with the world? Yes. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind about what would happen.

6168. *By the Chairman:* You must have protection in some form? Yes.

CHARLES EDWARD LUCAS, General Contractor, examined:

6169. *By the Chairman:* What are you? I am a general contractor for all farm work.

6170. Amongst your contracts have you taken any cane contracts? Yes.

6171. Do you appear here for any particular body? Yes; for the general workers of the Marian district as far as Abingdon. C. E. Lucas.
19 April, 1906.

6172. Now, will you just tell us the subjects on which you wish to be heard? I wish to be heard on the price to be fixed for the cutting season.

6173. Now, as to that, has your association fixed a price? Yes, we have fixed a price; but it cannot be put on a per ton basis. It is fixed on the class of cane to be cut.

6174. You wish that the cost of cutting the cane should be assessed according to the value of the cane cut? No; not exactly.

6175. *By Mr. Paget:* You assess it by the weight per acre? No; not exactly. Our members wish the price to be paid according to the quality of cane and according to the state of the cane when it is to be cut. There is one cane called Mahoava which is largely grown in this district, and some of it is running under a certain tonnage per acre. The Farmers' Association in town has fixed the rate to cut this cane at 3s. per ton for an 18-ton crop.

6176. *By Mr. Nielson:* We know their figures—we want your figures? Our figures are: Trashed cane, from 12 tons to the acre upwards, to be cut for 3s. 6d. per ton.

6177. *By Mr. Paget:* Cut and loaded? They load on to wagons, but not portable trams.

6178. Portable tramways under the same conditions? With portable trams 9d. extra. That is to provide for shifting the tramline. Reloaded cane at sidings, after being tipped from wagons, 1s. per ton.

6179. Is it the one price for loading into tram trucks and railway trucks? Yes.

6180. *By the Chairman:* What is the next work? For trashed cane lying down we are asking 3d. a ton extra. Under 12 tons and over 18 tons the farmers and the contractors make their own arrangements. For untrashed standing cane from 12 to 18 tons, 3s. 6d. a ton. Above 18 tons and under 12 tons it is a matter for mutual arrangement. Untrashed cane lying down, including loading, from 12 to 18 tons, 4s. a ton.

6281. *By Mr. Paget:* Virtually, you propose to cut and load crops from 12 to 18 tons, whether trashed or untrashed, at the same price? Yes; so long as it is standing cane.

6182. What do you consider a fair value for trashing cane? It depends on the class of cane. Nearly every variety is different.

6183. *By the Chairman:* Is it work you could not undertake by contract? Not to put a general price on it. You would want to see the class of cane.

6184. Have you fixed any other rates? For ploughing, 25s. a week and found; 30s. a week if not found. For hoeing, 20s. a week and found; if not found, 11s. a week extra, but there are very few cases where men have to find themselves. Planting is rather a difficulty in this district at present. The price is 10s. per acre for contract planting, the contractor to supply labour for cutting, carting, and dropping the plants in drills only. That does not include covering, but just dropping into furrows. They just cover them over with a plough or a disc barrow. The farmer has to find the horses and drays, and the distance for carrying must not be over half a mile. Special arrangements must be made when the distance exceeds half a mile.

6185. Your association has decided that those shall be the rates asked for? Yes.

6186. Have you met the Farmers' Association? We have met delegates.

6187. Did they approve of your rates? They approved of most of our ideas. The only thing they did not approve of was the ploughmen's wages.

6188. What action has been taken to secure finality? The field workers have formed a union and met a number of the farmers, who have agreed to our terms. On Friday night we are to settle when the farmers will meet us. Their association will not meet before next month, so that we cannot meet before then.

6189. Then it cannot be definitely settled until May? Not till the end of May.

6190. *By Mr. Nielson:* I presume ploughing does not include horse-scarifiers? No, it includes ploughmen only. The men using scarifiers are general labourers.

6191. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you appearing as a representative of the Sugar Workers' Union? No; of the Field Workers' Association only. We are absolutely distinct from the Sugar Workers' Union.

6192. You are dealing with the Marian branch of the Farmers' Association? Yes.

6193. When you stated that the Farmers' Association will meet next month, you referred to the Marian branch only? Yes.

6194. You are really a local union for doing local work? Yes. We do not go outside the Marian district.

6195. Are you a resident in this district? I have been here for the last twelve months. I anticipate being a resident of the district for a number of years. I contracted to take off cane last year.

6196. Did you conduct the contracts yourself? Yes.

6197. And employed labour? Two men were in with me, working share and share, and we had two men on wages at times when we wanted additional hands. When we were cutting ratoons we employed wages men; when we had plant cane we did the labour ourselves. I am paying all wages this year. I have made arrangements with Mr. Beldau to take his cane off.

6198. Does he supply cane to the Marian mill? No; it goes to the Eton mill.

6199. *By the Chairman:* Do you know that the workers in the Southern part of the State get better results from the share-and-share-alike? So far as my experience goes in the Northern part of the State, we could not have share-and-share-alike system, because you cannot get some men to work. I have

- C. E. Lucas worked for four or five years here, and the year before last I was at Proserpine with fourteen or fifteen men, and I started share-and-share-alike, but I found that it would not work at all. The only thing to do is to pay wages and a bonus according to a man's ability.
- 19 April, 1906. 6200. *By Mr. Paget*: You are talking here about the price for cane-cutting by contract? Yes.
6201. You have not told us what is a fair thing to pay for harvesting wages? I estimate it at 30s. a week and found for the cane-cutters during harvest.
6202. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you find sleeping accommodation, such as tents, or do farmers supply you? The contractors have to supply their own.
6203. You supply tents? Yes, and come up to the Shearers and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act. We also insure our men and take our own responsibility.
6204. *By the Chairman*: Under the Workers' Compensation Act? Yes.
6205. Where did you insure? With Mr. Joseph, in Mackay—the Commercial Union Insurance Company.
6206. They give an open policy? Yes.
6207. You spoke of having worked on Proserpine the year before last? Yes.
6208. How long were you there? Just for one crushing.
6209. As regards climate, did you see any difference between the climates of Mackay and Proserpine? No difference whatever.
6210. Are many of the men at the Proserpine married men? No; there are very few married men except the farmers.
6211. Are the farmers married? Yes.
6212. Do you know them? I know a big majority of them.
6213. Did you hear any complaint about the health of the women there? Yes. The season I was there the women complained because there was no get-away for the molasses.
6214. Was there any trouble with the women in connection with feminine complaints? None whatever that I heard of. With regard to the deportation of kanakas, I would like to point out to the Commission that there are a large number of farmers who were employing kanakas who are now employing white men. The Commission must thoroughly understand that a number of kanakas are already replaced.
6215. *By Mr. Nielson*: Yes, to some extent? Yes, to a big extent.
6216. *By the Chairman*: You say the kanakas are already being replaced by white labour? Yes, to a great extent. I wish to point out that although there are a number of kanakas to be deported it does not require the same number of white men to replace them. Only half the number of white men will be wanted.
6217. Just give us your idea on that particular point? I was a few years engaged as kanaka overseer at Kalamia plantation, on the Burdekin.
6218. And the result of your experience there is that it will not need 6,000 white men to replace the 6,000 kanakas who are leaving? My experience goes to show that it takes six kanakas to do the work of four white men. That is for general work. For cane-cutting and harvesting it would mean that three kanakas would be equal to one white man.
6219. *By Mr. Paget*: You say that one white man will do as much as three kanakas? Yes, on the average.
6220. *By the Chairman*: Do you think that is a correct estimate? I have taken particular notice of it. We allowed 23 cwt. per day for every kanaka at the Pioneer and Kalamia plantations, but my experience shows that a white man will average from 2 tons 17 cwt. to 3 tons per day while cane-cutting in this district.
6221. I am not doubting it, but that is contrary to the evidence we have got about the amount of cane a kanaka can cut? I have got it all here in my book.
6222. *By Mr. Paget*: You say that on the irrigated cane at Kalamia the kanakas only averaged 23 cwt. per kanaka per day? Yes. In 1904 I had under me fifty-eight kanakas, and the average of the gang right through was 60 tons 7 cwt. per day.
6224. Have you any idea how many tons to the acre that cane went? It went about 28 tons to the acre. That was at the Klondyke. The best part of it was standing cane, and it went 28 tons to the acre.
6226. *By Mr. Nielson*: Were they mostly newelums "boys"? I think the majority were old time "boys"—that is, "boys" who had been there for some time. I had seventeen newchums.
6227. How many overseers were there in charge of those men? I was the only overseer in charge of them.
6228. *By the Chairman*: And you feel confident of your figures? Yes; I do.
6229. Did those "boys" have to cut, trash, and load? They had to cut, trash, load, and cart it, and sometimes load it on to the trams. It was a portable tram, where you had to move it and change it every 100 yards, and it takes one man to look after it, if you have any size of a gang at all.
6230. *By Mr. Paget*: You say the islanders had to cut, load, and cart it? No; they loaded it on to the cart, and sometimes it was a portable tram.
6231. *By Mr. Nielson*: How far would the "boys" have to carry the cane? About half a chain. There were four or five rows of cane. Sometimes it would go three-quarters of a chain, but you are not supposed to let it go three-quarters of a chain. There is another thing I would like to put before the Commission about the labour that we received from the South, and that were working for me. The men who came from the South, including those from New South Wales and Victoria, I found to be superior to any class of labour—superior to most of the people now about the district and the men who are being imported as immigrants. I would sooner have five of them than seven men from the floating population or new arrivals. All the labour I have had from Brisbane has been as good a class of men as you could pick from any part of the world. They have been the record cane-cutters and woodcutters.
6232. *By the Chairman*: Have you had any of the larrikin class? Yes.
6233. How did they shape? When you get them going, they can keep with the middle class men. We had experience of them in this district not long ago. A great number of "boys" came up who were real "lads."
6234. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you had any members of the Woolloongabba "push"? Yes; and some of the Bulimba "push."
6235. *By the Chairman*: Can you lick them into shape? They make first-class men when they get into the work. You only want to keep them a bit under the whip.

6236. *By Mr. Nielson*: Where do you belong to originally? Brisbane; but it is ten or twelve years since I was there. At present my people are in Rockhampton. C. E. Lucas.
6237. *By the Chairman*: How long have you been in the North? For the last ten or twelve years. 19 April, 1906.
6238. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think there will be any difficulty in getting sufficient men to carry on the sugar industry? No difficulty at all if the Government will assist us in getting men from Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne.
6239. In what way should the Government assist? In case there is a shortage here, the Government should guarantee steamer fares, the Labour Bureau to collect the fares when the men get some money. Most of the men who come here are quite willing to pay their fares when returning to the South.
6240. If the Labour Bureau were properly organised, do you think it could be made of use to the employers and the workers? Yes.
6241. Do you think men could be engaged through the Government Bureau the same as they are through private registry offices? I think the private registry office will not work at all.
6242. Would you be satisfied to allow the Labour Bureau officer in Brisbane to engage men to come to work for you? Yes; if he sends the class of men I want.
6243. *By the Chairman*: You understand that if he sent you a man, you would have to take him—he would have to be your agent to engage men there? When the men come here they would have to be employed by me. I agree to that.
6244. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think many farmers and contractors feel the same on that question? My fellow contractors do. I cannot speak for the farmers.
6245. *By the Chairman*: The shipping companies are going to offer a rebate of 25 per cent. on steerage passages from the South? That will be a great inducement.
6246. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is there any desire on the part of the men you come in contact with to become permanent settlers in the sugar districts? There are a good many who desire to become settlers, if they are allowed to send their cane to any mill, and if they get some assistance from the Government.
6247. You mean to get land that already belongs to a central mill? No; land belonging to the Crown.
6248. You are aware that a man can select a homestead now. Do you know of any large area of Crown lands that has not been opened to selection? There is the Silent Grove land.
6249. Is it sufficiently close to the sugar districts for men to settle there and work on the plantations? Not unless we get a guarantee of a light railway. It will do for a certain class of men.
6250. Is it your opinion that men will only settle where they can grow cane? They would not all want to grow cane. You would not be able to grow cane at Silent Grove without a tram.
6251. You recognise that there are more men employed during the harvesting season than during the off season—have you any suggestion to offer as to what can be done for the men during the off season? If areas of virgin land were thrown open anywhere near the railway line, they might be settled on the land, supposing they could get it for a number of years with the right of purchase, and under an arrangement to take their crops off on a bonus. I am referring to Crown lands that anyone can select.
6252. Do you think men are desirous of having places of their own, where they can work during the off season? I think they are very desirous of taking up something like that.
6253. What maximum area would you suggest? Nothing under 40 acres. They could only work about 20 acres of that.
6254. Have you seen the Silent Grove lands? I have seen the best part of them.
6255. Is it first-class agricultural land? Not all of it.
6256. What quantity of first-class agricultural land is there? I have no idea.
6257. Is it fairly level? Some of it is very level.
6258. Does it appear to be rich deep soil? Yes.
6259. Would you recommend that the areas there should be limited to 40 acres on the picked parts of the land? Yes.
6260. Where a man had to take partly forest and partly scrub land, what area would you recommend? At the very least, 50 acres of forest land.
6261. And then I suppose if he wanted all forest, nothing less than 80 acres? No; nothing less than 80 acres.
6262. *By the Chairman*: Do you honestly think that if any Crown lands—I do not say the Silent Grove land, but any similar Crown lands—were opened working men would avail themselves of it? I feel quite confident that the men would avail themselves of it, given the terms I state.
6263. Yesterday we had put before us a suggestion for the settlement of people on the land, and the suggestion was that land should be given to persons practically for nothing, subject to their fulfilling certain conditions extending over a period of five years, one of those conditions being that the men should agree to give a certain number of years' labour in the sugar industry wherever they liked, only they must undertake to contract for five or six months in the cane fields, and have a rest in the slack time at their own residences—Would anyone take up land on those terms? I think I would take it all right.
6264. They would get the land for nothing? The only thing against it would be that the man could walk away from the land at any time.
6265. He would not get the land then? He could work the land for a number of years and then walk off it.
6266. If the sugar industry had the use of his labour for five or six years, possibly he might stop then? Yes.
6267. You think they would not object to that as a condition? No.
6268. *By Mr. Nielson*: Suppose they could get the land just as easily without any conditions, are they likely to take it up with this condition?—because they can get land without any conditions? They would sooner take it up without conditions.
6269. They can get it on better terms than that already? Yes.
6270. *By Mr. Paget*: It has been suggested in various places that there might be a system of discharge certificates, or references, amongst the workers, just the same as there is in the pastoral industry; what do you think of that? The intention of the Field Labourers' Association is that when a man leaves his last employer, to give him a sort of certificate.
6271. Then you generally approve of such a scheme? Yes.
6272. The certificate would be practically a form that everybody would use? Yes.
6273. There is a great diversity of opinion on the subject? Yes.
6274. *By the Chairman*: But you approve of the issue of certificates? Yes.

JAMES AUGUSTUS EDWARDS, further examined:

J. A. Edwards.
19 April, 1906. 6276. *By the Chairman*: You want to add something to your former evidence? No. I want to say something about the evidence that the last witness has given. He said that he made an agreement to accept a certain wage for a certain amount of cane cut. I take it that he said if there was more cane to be cut to the acre, he should get a higher price for it; but as a matter of fact, he ought to get less, because the denser the crop the more profit to the man who cuts it. One stroke of the knife will cut it. That is something for that gentleman to lay before his friends and ask them whether it is wise to ask for an increased price for a denser crop.

EDWIN JOHN ROWE, Farmer, examined:

E. J. Rowe.
19 April, 1906. 6277. *By the Chairman*: Where do you reside? I reside at the Marian.
6278. What is the area of your farm? 110 acres.
6279. How much of that is under cane? Something like 20 acres.
6280. How much did you cut last year? About 160 tons.
6281. Did you cut it by black or white labour? White labour.
6282. By contract or otherwise? My own boys cut it.
6283. *By Mr. Paget*: Family labour? Yes; my two sons cut it.
6284. *By the Chairman*: Do you ever have to employ labour outside your own family? No.
6285. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you intend increasing the area you have under cane? One boy has just left school and the other has been with me for two or three years, so I hope now to increase the area. I have been working it chiefly by myself, with what little help the eldest lad could give me.
6286. Do you expect to be in a position to employ white labour in the future? Yes. With regard to settling men on the land, Mr. Lucas said just now that to get reliable labour you should give them 40 acres of good land or 80 acres of forest land, but I think they should get about 5 acres. If you put a man on 40 acres of good land and he put it under cane, he would have to stop at home to look after it, and you would lose him as a labourer.
6287. You may not be able to get all the men you want at once, but by the time this man was ready to cut his cane further labour would be attracted to this district? You might get his labour for a couple of years; but if a man has 40 acres, he is there with the idea of growing cane.
6288. If the area is restricted to 5 acres, do you think men will take up such a holding when they can get 40 acres anywhere else? If they can get 40 acres anywhere else, they will take it up with the intention of growing cane.
6289. *By Mr. Nielson*: You are looking at it entirely from your own point of view; but, if you can settle a man on 40 acres, and get that area under cane, are you bettering the industry as a whole? Decidedly.
6290. A man needs money before he can tackle the cultivation of 40 acres, and if he does not bring that money with him, he can only earn it by finding employment with persons already in the industry? By giving him 40 acres, you are giving it to him to work as a cane farmer.
6291. But until he does that he will be the most reliable man you can have? You can depend upon his labour for two years, but it is questionable after that, unless you have an agreement binding him down to work as a labourer for so many months in the year.
6292. *By the Chairman*: Do you think any man would take up land with that condition attached to it? I think so.
6293. *By Mr. Nielson*: When he can get plenty of land without such a condition? Can you get plenty of land? I do not think you can in this district.
6294. But there is land in other districts, and the object is to get men into the sugar districts—Would not the fact that a man could get 40 acres induce him to bring one or two more men here as well? It might, but the idea is to get reliable labour here. If you give a man 40 acres, I cannot see how you can rely upon his labour.
6295. Do you know any man who is worth anything at all whose ambition is to remain a labourer all his life? No.
6296. *By the Chairman*: You must hold out inducements to him to make something better of his life? We all like to better ourselves. If you gave a man 5 acres, his labour would be more reliable to the industry. My idea is a sort of village settlement within touch of the mills.
6297. *By Mr. Paget*: Where is the land to be found? I believe there are reserves on the river below here. I could not say exactly where, but within 3 miles of the Marian mill.
6298. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is it fairly good land? I believe so.
6299. *By Mr. Paget*: Is that land a reserve? Yes.
6300. Is it one of the reserves that we have had some correspondence with the Lands Department about with respect to cutting it up into workers' homesteads? I cannot say. There is one at Playstowe, and one nearer here, which is also a reserve. There is also that land at Walsh's, which is within 2 miles of the railway.
6301. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know the Silent Grove land? No.

EDWARD HANNAN, Licensed Victualler and Cane Farmer, examined:

E. Hannan.
19 April, 1906. 6302. *By the Chairman*: Just as regards these reserves, you might say a few words about them? I do not wish to say anything about farming, but with regard to these reserves I may tell you that I am a member of the Pioneer Shire Council, and we want the reserves.
6303. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you here to-day as a representative of the Farmers' Association? Yes; I am a member of the Marian branch.
6304. Yes? Well, as regards these reserves, I may tell you that we may not want them this year next year, but we may want them in years to come, when they will be of great service to us. They are at present of great convenience to the travelling public, to teamsters, and to settlers of any kind who come travelling along there.
6305. *By the Chairman*: You would not like to see them resumed? No.

6306. Your shire council objects to resuming them? Yes, we have been fighting against it for the last twelve or eighteen months.
6307. There has been an attempt to resume them? Yes, the reserve at Pleystowe.
6308. And you resent it? Yes.
6309. What are the reserves used for? Travelling stock.
6310. Is there any travelling stock now? Yes; large quantities at times. I have seen a large number in there at times.
6311. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is it used for relief country? No; but people travelling to relief country use it. People want some place to go to with their travelling stock.
6312. *By the Chairman*: Have the reserves any other utility except for travelling stock and relief country? When people are travelling they may have five or six horses, and they halt them on these reserves.
6313. What is the area of this particular reserve? It might be 200 acres. I would like to add that I think that a man can get a good living on 5 acres of land.
6314. *By Mr. Nielson*: It depends on where the land is? If it was close to a big town he could grow cabbage and other vegetables and send them in.
6315. *By the Chairman*: Can you help us on the question of Crown lands at all? As regards settling people on the land in the reserves here, I think it would be absurd, because I do not think you would get a man to settle there and walk 5 miles to work at the mill.
6316. Do you know any Crown lands in the Silent Grove? Yes; there are lands on Cattle Creek that should be taken up.
6317. What sort of land is it? It is scrub land.
6318. What sort of land is it? The Government has leased it to farmers, and some of it is reserved.
6319. Then it is not available? No; there is a lease over them, with the option of taking them for a number of years.
6320. We want to know about land that is not taken up? For people with means, this land on Silent Grove would do. Eighty acres ought to be a fair farm for any man. I am a believer in big areas myself.
6321. Would you not let the small men have a show at all? Certainly, let the small men have a show if they are in a position to take it up. Mr. Rowe said that 40-acre blocks would do for a man working round the district. If a man gets 10 acres of good land near the mills, someone will ask him to plant on the land, and he is gone.
6322. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is it not a good thing to have a settler in the district? Yes, good luck to him; but if they want to bring mill hands here, let them buy a piece of land, and open it up for settlement.
6323. *By the Chairman*: Resume the land? Yes.
6324. How much would you give each man? For a man going to work with the mills or for farmers, I think one acre is plenty. He might be given a house, and he should be allowed time to pay for it, and have an inspector to look after him.
6325. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think you will get men to settle down on an acre of land all their lives and work at the mill? There are men who will settle there all their lives, because they have not got a chance of getting on. Men prefer sticking to wages work rather than take up land on their own. I would very much like to see them settle here and have a big settlement.
6326. *By the Chairman*: But you will not give them anything to settle on? You cannot ask the Government to buy a farmer out to give them 5 acres of it.
6327. We are talking about the Government using the land they have already got? If a man brings a family from the South, or from New Zealand, or from Scotland, he will come up here and work in the crushing season. He will take a piece of land and work in the busy season elsewhere, and perhaps put in his spare time on this homestead.
6328. Would that system pay? It will not improve the men very much, and the land will not improve very much either if the men settle down merely on what they make in the busy season.
6329. *By Mr. Paget*: Would they not improve their holdings? No.
6330. *By Mr. Nielson*: How long have you been in Queensland? Fourteen or fifteen years.
6331. Have not 80 per cent. of the men got to work for wages to keep their selections going? Yes; that is right.
6332. And are they not a class of men who should get every encouragement? Yes; but I fail to see how you can give them encouragement by giving them 5 acres of land.
6333. You only want to give them one acre? I know the Government are in favour of leasing 5 acres to them, as they wrote and asked the Pioneer Council about getting on the Pleystowe reserve.
6334. *By Mr. Paget*: And another reserve? Yes. I believe there was; but it is useless to put a mill hand or any energetic man there.
6335. *By the Chairman*: Would you be in favour of settling these reserves with one acre for each man? I am in favour of the council getting those reserves and leasing them, but not the Government. Part of the reserves have water frontages that are of great service to the travelling public.
6336. *By Mr. Paget*: You say you would rather the council did this work than the Government? In later years we may want those reserves. They are used wherever there is a big settlement.
6337. But in the meanwhile you think they might be utilised in some way? Yes.
6338. You know a number of pieces of scrub land have already been leased at Plane Creek and other places? Yes. The Silent Grove land, though, is useless without trammies or something like them.
6339. Do you think it would be too far away for workers' homes? Yes; if a man brings his family. That is a man with his wife and a couple of children. Those are the people we want. They settle down, and the man can go out in the busy season and earn his living. He leaves his wife behind to look after the place, and if there is no one else settled there, it is awkward for them. Whereas if the land is close to the mill, he can go to his home from his work.
6340. *By the Chairman*: There are lots of places in Queensland 10 or 20 miles from the railway where farming is going on and the people are doing well there? Yes; I am aware of that.
6341. Then why should they not do well here—there was a time when there were no railways in Queensland and the people prospered? I know that.
6342. But you say Silent Grove is no good because there is no railway? I say so because it is not near a railway.

E. Hauman.
19 April, 1906.

- E. Hannan, 19 April, 1906. 6343. *By Mr. Nielson*: We would be glad if you could suggest any land that is nearer, as those are the nearest we have heard of? I thought it was for the working men of the district from what I could learn.
6344. We want the good men working in this district to all make a home for themselves? Well, Silent Grove would be plenty good enough, but I would not care to settle on it if I came into the district a perfect stranger, and I would not ask other people to do what I would not do myself.
6345. *By Mr. Paget*: What area are you cultivating? I have a little over 150 acres under cane.
6346. Is it being cultivated by white labour? No; by black labour.
6347. Are you not registered? I am registered now.
6348. Then it is your intention to work it with white labour? Yes.
6349. Will you work it by wages or by contract? By contract. It is scrub land, both flat and hilly.
6350. Do you anticipate any difficulty in carrying on your operations with white labour on scrub land of that description? Not that I can see. There are young chaps coming from Brisbane at 10s. and 15s. a week.
6351. *By the Chairman*: What aged youths do you get for 10s. and 15s. a week? I suppose they are from fifteen to twenty years old. I could name three working round here for 10s. a week at the very most—good men, too.
6352. *By Mr. Paget*: Do they cut and load cane for that money? They did it last year, and they did any farm work that was required.
6353. Are they under agreement? They came from Brisbane under agreement for six or twelve months.
6354. Does the employer pay the steamer fare? I think it is deducted from their wages if they do not stop their full time.
6355. I suppose there is not a large number of those lads? No.
6356. *By the Chairman*: They will not re-engage at those rates? No; that is a certainty. They are greatly dissatisfied when they come here and find that men doing exactly the same work are getting £1 or 22s. 6d. a week.
6357. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know how those young fellows were engaged? I think they were engaged through a registry office.

JOHN RIDDELL, Cane Farmer, examined:

- J. Riddell, 19 April, 1906. 6358. *By the Chairman*: Where do you reside? At the Marian.
6359. What is the area of your farm? 500 acres, one way and another. I have two or three selections.
6360. How much have you under cane? I cannot say exactly. About 30 acres.
6361. How much did you cut last year? I did not cut much last year, because the labour has gone away, and the labour knocking about is of little use.
6362. Did you cut any cane last year? Yes; 300 tons.
6363. You would have cut more if you could have got the labour to cut it? I took off what there was.
6364. Did you use white or black labour? Black labour; but I have dispensed with black labour now.
6365. You are now registered? Yes.
6366. What did it cost you per ton to cut it last year? I cannot exactly say. The first time I employed black labour it cost me 43d. per ton to cut and load.
6367. *By Mr. Nielson*: When was that? Twenty years ago.
6368. *By the Chairman*: On what subject do you wish to speak to-day? On the subject that the labour is very unsatisfactory and unreliable, and I consider we have not got the proper class of men in the district for the sugar industry. I think the best thing we can do is to put them on Castle Connell and give them tucker, and let them stop there. Half of them do not want work at all.
6369. Are you employing white labour now? Yes.
6370. How many men have you? I am paying £1 a week for ploughmen, and that has been the general rate for farming in Mackay while I have been here.
6371. What are you paying for chipping? I am paying one young fellow 13s. a week, and I think it is quite sufficient.
6372. How old is he? Between thirteen and sixteen.
6373. I have heard it stated here that the "boys" cannot cut more than 17 cwt. to 23 cwt. per day? I have got "boys" who cut 4 tons 4 cwt. One "boy" loaded 2 tons 2 cwt. in twenty-five minutes. I pay the kanakas £20 a year.
6374. *By Mr. Nielson*: In what crop? I do not pay much attention to what it is per acre.
6375. *By Mr. Paget*: Was it a good crop? Yes.
6376. *By Mr. Nielson*: That makes all the difference? A man can only pay a certain amount, and if he pays more he will go to the wall.
6377. It makes a difference in the cutting and loading? You will get some men who will do 25 cwt., but the general run of "boys" will cut from 2 tons 2 cwt. to 3 tons. I have been twenty-four years in the sugar industry here, and I ought to know something about it.
6378. *By the Chairman*: What do you consider is a fair price for cutting cane? I should say 3s. per ton for cutting any crop, and it is all the farmer can afford.
6379. That is cutting and loading? Yes.
6380. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you thrown much of your land out of cultivation? I have thrown out a good bit, and I will throw it all up.
6381. How much have you thrown up? About one-third of it.
6382. How many acres? The year before last I had between 500 and 600 tons. I have 200 acres of scrub land, but I have to throw it up. I cannot depend on white men; the kanakas are the best to be relied on, as they are as sure of foot as a possum. They can cross over a gully with an armful of cane to a dry or wagon without any difficulty, but a white man is no use for that. He will fall down with his first armful, and when he gets up he will swear at you.
6383. How do they manage to shepherd sheep in the Highlands of Scotland without kanakas? You cannot tell me about sheep, because I have been a shepherd in the Highlands.
6384. You did not want kanakas to help you there? No. We had dogs well up to the sheep.
6385. How many acres have you ever had under cultivation? I never measured the crops, but I always keep about the same area.
6386. Have you had 30 acres? Sometimes I have, and sometimes I have not.

6387. Have you ever had 80 acres? No. I have 200 acres of scrub, and I must let it go to waste— J. Riddell.
it is only a white elephant now.
6388. *By Mr. Paget:* Is it hill scrub? Yes. 19 April, 1906.
6389. *By Mr. Nielson:* Can you tell us within 5 acres the biggest area you ever had under cane? From 30 to 35 acres.
6390. What is the greatest number of kanakas you ever employed? Three.
6391. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you cultivate any other land at all? I am cultivating other land now.
6392. But it is not of as good quality as the scrub land? No. You want scrub land, and it must all go to waste when the kanakas have gone.
6393. What kind of land are you cultivating now? Forest land.
6394. Is it forest ridges or flat country? Flat. I am draining it.
6395. Were the scrubs you had under cultivation too hilly to plough? It was all hand labour.
6396. Was it too stoney? A lot of it was stoney.
6397. *By Mr. Nielson:* What are you doing with the balance of your land? I run cattle and horses on it.
6398. Are you dairying? No.
6399. You are breeding cattle and horses? Yes, and I intend starting dairying. Sugar will not pay, as I am 5 miles from the mill. I have had to load three times in wet weather before I could get my cane to the mill. I do not believe there is a mile of shire council road altogether. It is all through private property, and I have had to make the roads. With the wages white men ask, I do not see how I can carry on.
6400. It is a big haulienp to be so far from the mill? Yes. I have asked the company to lay a tramline, and it was promised. I was one of the first that put in my deeds, and my neighbour and I send over 1,000 tons to the mill, and still they will not give us the tramline.
6401. *By the Chairman:* How much land have you that you could put under cane? I could grow 2,000 or 3,000 tons if I had the labour.
6402. Cannot you grow it with white labour? No.
6403. *By Mr. Nielson:* What do the shire council value your land at? About £1 an acre.
6404. What do you value it at? If you find me a tenant, I will give him the whole working concern at a very reasonable thing.
6405. What do you value it at? I am not putting any valuation on it.
6406. Would you take the shire council valuation? I will take what the Government have got for it. The Government valuation for one selection was £670, and I will let them have it with £200 worth of buildings for that amount.
6407. Supposing the company built you a tramline? Then I would go on with white labour.
6408. The tramline is your trouble? Yes. I applied to Dr. Maxwell, but he did not give me any satisfaction.
6409. You have some neighbours? Only one. I have two or three selections, and I grow a sufficient quantity to guarantee a tramline. For a while the excuse was want of money, and now that they have the money they do not seem prepared to do anything.

DANIEL MARKEY, Farmer, examined :

6410. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your farm? 1,050 acres. D. Markey.
6411. How much of that is under cane? Roughly, about 450 acres. 19 April, 1906.
6412. Did you cut any cane last year? Yes.
6413. How many tons? I sent away 2,300 tons.
6414. White or black labour? Black labour last year.
6415. Are you registered now? Yes.
6416. Are you employing any men at the present time? Yes.
6417. At what wages? £1 a week and found.
6418. Have you made arrangements for taking off the crop next season? Yes.
6419. What terms are you making to take it off? I am giving 3s. per ton for cutting and loading into wagons and drays.
6420. Is it trashed cane? No, untrashed.
6421. Is it level ground? It is all level country.
6422. Do you anticipate any shortage of labour next year? I do.
6423. Do you think, as far as you are concerned, that you will be able to get the men you want? I have got my men for this coming year. The contractors will have to find the men.
6424. You have got all the men you want? I have got contractors to take the crop off.
6425. *By Mr. Paget:* You have let a contract for cutting and loading the cane? Yes.
6426. Can you tell us whether the cutting gang will be share-and-share-alike, or will be hired by the contractors? I have not signed a contract yet. Two men are going to take the contract from me, and they will employ the men. That is what I understand.
6427. Have you any idea what wages will be paid? I have no idea.
6428. As a matter of fact, you have never employed any white labour in harvesting except by contract for cutting and loading? No, I never have.
6429. You say you have registered the whole of your estate? Yes, the whole 1,050 acres.
6430. And you are not employing any black labour? No, not since the 15th of January.
6431. Are you planting new areas this year or replanting? Yes, 57 acres.
6432. In planting that 57 acres, are you increasing your area under cultivation? I am decreasing it. My planting in former years has been from 70 to 80 acres, as I planted yearly.
6433. *By the Chairman:* Why are you decreasing it? Owing to the labour supply.
6434. Are you afraid you will not get sufficient labour? I am certain of it.
6435. *By Mr. Nielson:* You are only 20 acres less than last year? Yes; and I will be 20 acres less again.
6436. *By the Chairman:* Are you not interested in this mill? No.
6437. Your lads are not in the mill? No.

D. Markey. 6438. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you send your cane to the Marian mill? Yes; to the Racecourse and Marian mills. I send my cane to the mill where I get the highest price. I am independent about it, and that is how I feel.

19 April, 1906.

6439. You are rather a large canegrower? Yes.

6440. You are aware that under existing federal legislation some thousands of Polynesians are to be deported at the end of this year? Yes.

6441. And it will make a serious deficiency in the labour supply? I am certain of it.

6442. Will it affect you? I am certain it will, and others too.

6443. Are you taking any steps to supply the labour that you require to take off your crops, and do your work for the future? I am going to reduce my crops to what I can do myself. I am cutting it down because I cannot pay the wages that are supposed to be paid. I cannot afford it. I have been too long at the game, and I know all about it.

6444. Are we to take it that you are unable to grow cane at the wages that are asked with the bonus given by the Federal Government and the price you are getting for the cane? The difficulty is in getting labour. When everybody starts using white labour, then the labour will not be here.

6445. Can you offer any suggestions to us as to how labour might be brought in? Yes; immigration.

6446. Can you give us any idea as to where you desire the immigrants to be brought from? Bring them from Europe.

6447. *By Mr. Nielson*: What inducement would you hold out to immigrants to come out here? Give them what employment I have got, the same as I had to do myself when I first came out here.

6448. I want your idea how to induce these men to come out here? I would advise them to stay at home.

6449. They are doing that now, as there is not the same percentage leaving Denmark or Germany per annum that there used to be? They go to America.

6450. You would be surprised to see how very few Germans and Scandinavians leave now? I see the bulk of the population which leaves England, Ireland, and Scotland goes to America.

6451. Do they get any special inducements? I do not know about that.

6452. Then they want an inducement to come here? It is for the Government to hold it out.

6453. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you suggest any inducement that the State Government might hold out for immigrants to come here? That is a ticklish thing.

6454. *By Mr. Nielson*: We want to find out your ideas? All I can suggest would be to give employment to them. We can pay from 18s. to 25s. a week for labourers with the bonus, but not exceeding that.

6455. What about these men's fares out—Who ought to pay that? I think the Government ought to pay that.

6456. Why do you think so? To open up the country. They will be men who will be for the benefit of the country.

6457. *By the Chairman*: You say they should be induced to come out? Yes; that is my opinion.

6458. *By Mr. Paget*: Every immigrant that enters the State is worth a capital value of so much? Yes.

6459. *By Mr. Nielson*: Then how are you going to induce them to come into the sugar districts, and remain there, when we have got them as far as Queensland? I do not know.

6460. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you think the inducement of 18s. to 25s. a week and found would be sufficient to induce agricultural labourers to come into the sugar districts? I think so. I think that ought to be a fair inducement.

6461. *By Mr. Nielson*: But you see there would be nothing to assure you that they would not go to the Southern districts or leave the next week for New Zealand, as they did when the Government brought them out before? That is a good thing for the colonies.

6462. *By the Chairman*: What good is it to you if the people who are brought out here go to the Downs and New Zealand? —

6463. *By Mr. Nielson*: Can you hold out any inducement to people in the old country? The only inducement that I have discovered is the expectation that they can become landholders, but they will have to do the same as I did if they want a home, and that is to make it. Let them make the money and take care of themselves.

6464. *By the Chairman*: Did you come out when land orders were given? No. I got no land order. I paid £18 to come.

6465. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is there plenty of land available in the district? Any amount, but you have to go back to get it.

6466. Is there good land back? Yes.

6467. How far is it from here? At Silent Grove, within 2 miles of McGregor's Creek tramline.

6468. What area of Crown lands is there? There is a large area of good land.

6469. *By Mr. Paget*: We have been given to understand that the Silent Grove lands are 5 or 6 miles from the head of the tramline? Two miles from the head of the line will take you into them.

6470. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you belong to the Farmers' Association? Yes.

6471. You have taken no steps to find out what labour is available in Queensland and New South Wales? No.

6472. You think there is not sufficient labour available in the district? Yes.

6473. What inducement has there been for workmen to congregate in the Mackay district up to the present time? There has been any amount of work for them.

6474. Have there not been any amount of men to take the jobs that have been offering? Not in the crop time. I could not get labourers last year when I was looking for them.

6475. *By the Chairman*: What wages were you offering? I should have had to give whatever wages were going.

6476. Did you see no men at all? The men about the roads were not able to do a day's work.

6477. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did you ever avail yourself of the Labour Bureau in Mackay? No.

6478. Do you think the bureau can be of any assistance? I dare say it can be; but I am looking at the number of people registered and the amount of labour we had here. That convinces me that we shall not have the labour unless men come that we never had before.

6479. You cannot expect a lot of men to remain in a district waiting for work a year ahead? We shall have a very fair trial of it this time.

6480. Has your association done anything in the way of advertising or letting it be known in the South that there will be work here, and what the rates of pay are? Yes; and we have written to the Government, too.

D. Markey.

19 April, 1906.

6481. Are you advertising in any of the Southern newspapers? What is the good of advertising until the time comes for the crop to be cut.

6482. *By the Chairman:* If you advertised in the Southern papers, men might put themselves in communication with you, and make arrangements to come here when you want them? They might.

6483. Do you think it is worth trying? I doubt it.

6484. *By Mr. Paget:* There are two visitors in this district, at the present time, from the Richmond River, who represent a number of men; and they are looking at the crops to see what condition they are in, and to ascertain the price at which they might contract for the harvesting—In the small locality from which they came they say there are forty or fifty men who are willing to come North to do this work? That is more than we were aware of before.

6485. *By Mr. Nielson:* That is an indication that there are men in that district who are willing to do the work, and it should induce men here to make an effort to let their wants be known? It was done once before by a man named Hely, who pretended that he was taking contracts. He advertised for men, and brought some here before the crushing, and it brought people into bad odour. They came with very little money in their pockets, and had to remain here.

6486. It should show you, at any rate, that men can be got? Yes; but we had a certain amount of black labour at that time to fall back upon, and in future we shall not have that. Our crop is on the ground, and it has to be taken off by some means.

6487. *By Mr. Paget:* Is there anything else you can suggest to us? No. This year we have to see what will come of it. If immigrants were landed it would be no time till they were employed.

6488. *By the Chairman:* At the current rates of wages? Certainly. A man who is worth his money can always get it. I pay him according to his value.

DAVID COYNE, Cane Farmer, examined:

6489. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer.

D. Coyne.

19 April, 1906.

6490. What is the area of your farm? About 800 acres.

6491. What area have you got under cane? About 150 acres.

6492. Did you cut any last year? Yes, 75 acres.

6493. Do you remember the tonnage? 810 tons.

6494. Did you cut with white or black labour? All white since 1902.

6495. Was it cut by contract or by weekly wage? I cut and loaded by contract, and all the other work was done by day work.

6496. What did you pay per ton for cutting and loading? I had very good men last year and they made as much as £2 or £3 a week at 3s. a ton. I had very heavy cane.

6497. *By Mr. Paget:* Was it trashed or untrashed? It was nearly all self-trashing cane. There was one man who cut and loaded 30 tons one week by himself. I paid 3s. a ton for ration cane too.

6498. *By the Chairman:* Have you made any arrangements for taking off your crop this year? Not yet.

6499. What wages do you pay ordinarily? £1 a week and found.

6500. Do you expect to be short of labour this year? I am not short of labour so far.

6501. *By Mr. Paget:* But during the coming crushing season? I cannot tell what may happen.

6502. Are you taking any steps to have your crop harvested? I have taken no steps whatever. As the Government have taken so many steps in the matter, I am depending upon their not starving us out; but I think I shall be depending on a very weak reed.

6503. *By the Chairman:* We want to devise some steps by which you can have more men available? I am a very large employer. At present I have eleven men working for me. I pay them £1 a week and good food. I could guarantee to give a certain amount of work, and I would like other farmers to do the same. I could guarantee to keep six or seven men working all the year round.

6504. Do you think it would be a good thing for all employers in the district to give a guarantee that they would employ so much labour? It would be a good thing, because we would have labour here and keep it amongst us. I could guarantee six or seven myself. I am not speaking for any labour party or anyone else but myself.

6505. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many extra men would you want? Not many more. When you are in poor forest land it takes as much labour in the off season to produce your crop as it does in the crushing season to take it off. There is the ploughing and hoeing to be done, and all that kind of thing. Of course there are exceptions. My experience is of twenty-four years' standing, if it is of any use to you.

6506. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you planting your ordinary area this year? I will have 40 or 50 acres planted before the 1st of May comes. I have a feeling that things will all be well, but if things go down, then I will go down with them.

6507. Are you here representing the Marian branch of the Farmers' Association? I am one of the delegates, but I am also speaking for myself.

6508. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think the white labour is satisfactory since you started? I will answer a straight question. So far white labour is satisfactory, but there is no reliance to be placed on the men. You might have a man who thoroughly satisfies you, but he goes off on Saturday night and wastes his cheque, and that is the last you will see of him.

6509. What happens then? The whole thing must work unanimously as it were. The men cut the cane and load it, and the horse-drivers are ready to take it away. If the cane-cutters are not there, and the cane is left lying in the field, what is the good of the horse-drivers?

6510. *By the Chairman:* Do you not engage men by the twelve months? What is the good of that?

6511. It will make the men stop? I have had twenty-four years' experience, and I can tell you that, when Saturday night comes, a man will want his money, and I have to give it. Some of them will perhaps not draw it all; but then they will come on Sunday or Monday for the balance, and I give it.

6512. Do you not keep back a week's wages? No. Some of them want a week's wages in advance.

6513. You should not pay him in advance? It would not compensate me to keep back a week's wages.

- D. Coyne. 6514. It would be a check on a man? No; if he wants to go he will go. When a man wants his money I always let him have it, and I am just as likely to give him half a day in.
- 19 April, 1906. 6515. *By Mr. Paget*: It is a practice in the sugar districts that no notice is required on either side? Yes, that is the practice.
6516. *By the Chairman*: It is a bad practice? It is the practice all the same.
6517. *By Mr. Nielson*: A man is not reliable so far as you are concerned, and you are not reliable so far as the men are concerned? Yes; but he drops into the soup.
6518. Either might do that? No, he never loses a week's wages.
6519. *By the Chairman*: Did you ever discharge a man without giving him a week's notice? No. I tell a man how long I will keep him, and if he wants a week longer I give it to him. It is no use keeping men if they do not want to stop. I have kept men when it was raining, and on the first fine day they would come for their money, and I have to plunk it down no matter what I lose by it. I am an old farmer in this district and I am one of the representatives of the farmer's here. I am one of the first that guaranteed to put up the first Marian mill and I am the only one left.
6520. Would you not get over the difficulty if you had married men settled down here? I think that would settle the difficulty as I have married men working for me.
6521. If your married men were settled on farms with their wives, would they not be more likely to stick to you? Yes, they would be more reliable.
6522. Would you approve of that? I would approve of settling men in homes of their own, as they would always have their homes to go to, and would be sure of constant work. I am a colonist, and I take the State to heart; and I would like to see a lot of settlements of that description, to help settle the people on the land, in place of the floating population.
6523. Do you know the Silent Grove land? I can form a good opinion of it.
6524. Would that be too far away to settle people on it? No; you could put a railway line to it.
6525. You want a railway line, but you cannot have it all at once? It will come some time. I would like to see the development of the country. I am interested in the development of this country.
6526. How much land would you give a man in a place like that? That man might not always want to go to work. He must depend on his day wages for a living. If a man wants to go into the bush and make a home for himself and make a living out of it, he must have a certain amount of agricultural land. The least amount he could do with to make a living out of it would be 160 acres.
6527. The idea is that you should be the means of his getting a living? But he would make a home for himself and become an employer.
6528. You would not begrudge him that? No; I would like to see every man getting along. If you cut up Silent Grove it is no use giving a man less than 160 acres.
6529. You have some ideas about the deportation of the islanders? The "boys" have been here up to thirty years. Some of them have been here since childhood, and they know nothing about their islands now. They are living as white men, and some of them are married to white women. I have no love for the kanakas, but I think it would be very wrong to try to deport these "boys" to the islands they came from. Some of them came at the age of sixteen and they are fifty years of age now. If they go back to their islands they will be unknown. Some of them have attended mission schools and cannot live in a wild state. As soon as they get to the island, if they are fairly fat, they might make a good feed. I would like to see the "boys" who have to be deported put on some large island, or in some place where the Government can supply them with sufficient food and implements to enable them to make a living for themselves.
6530. *By Mr. Paget*: Where would you suggest this island should be? I am not well acquainted with the islands, but I believe the best place to take them to is British New Guinea. I would like to see them treated as human beings, and not as animals, or as creatures beneath contempt. Although they are black, they have bodies and souls the same as I have, and in days to come I would not like it to be said that the Commonwealth had treated them with inhumanity. I would be satisfied to pay taxes for them. I do not suggest this for myself, but for the sake of the country I live in. I am not an Australian by birth, but I have lived in Australia for the last thirty-two years, and I would not like to see my country do anything wrong.

(Homebush.)

FRIDAY, 20 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.
MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

SAMUEL ARBUTHNOT, Cane Farmer, examined:

S. Arbuthnot. 6532. *By the Chairman*: Where do you reside? At Sandford.

6533. What is the area of your farm? About 460 acres.

6534. Is it all under cane? No; about 95 acres of it are under cane this year.

6535. *By Mr. Paget*: What is the total cultivation? About 130 acres. At least I have grubbed and cleared that area, but it is not all under cane.6536. *By the Chairman*: How much did you cut last year? 115 acres.

6537. White or black labour? Black.

6538. Can you form any estimate as to what it cost you to cut it—Was it trashed or untrashed? It was untrashed. It cost me about 3s per ton. I was not supplied with enough trucks at the time I was cutting, or I could have cut a great deal more.

6539. That is cutting and loading on to the trams? Yes.

6540. Are you registered for the coming season? Yes, for all my crop.

6541. And have you made any arrangements for taking off the crop in the coming season? Yes; the company will cut my cane next season.

6542. What will the company charge? It is not settled yet. We are trying to settle the rates for S. Arbutnot cutting.
6543. What did the company charge last year for cutting? I paid the "boys" 15s. a week and found. 20 April, 1906. I could have cut it cheaper myself. I could not get enough trucks to take the cane to the mill.
6544. *By Mr. Paget*: Did the company find the "boys"? Yes; they got them from Thursday Island, and gave them to me when I was cutting.
6545. *By the Chairman*: The company cut your cane for you, and just charged what the thing costs? Yes. They charged me what the "boys" cost. They charge me 3s. per ton sometimes, and sometimes 2s. 9d.
6546. Have you to depend on results next year? They will let me know before we start cutting what the price will be.
6547. *By Mr. Paget*: What will be by white men? Yes; they are going to employ white gangs.
6548. *By the Chairman*: As regards the cultivation of cane, have you cultivated with white labour? I always had ploughmen.
6549. Who did the chipping? It was always done by "boys."
6550. I believe you intend to chip with white labour? Yes.
6551. At what wages? We are trying to settle that now.
6552. Has your association made any scale yet? Yes, but it has not been approved of by the Cane-workers' Union in Mackay.
6553. What is the scale your association has submitted? £1 a week and found for chipping and general work.
6554. Is it the same scale we have before us here? Yes.
6555. Is it the Mackay scale? Yes.
6556. It has not yet been approved by the Workers' Union? No. The delegates met and passed it, but it has not been submitted by those delegates to their union.
6557. *By Mr. Paget*: We learned from Mr. Tait the other day that these arrangements had to be confirmed by the union? Yes.
6558. *By the Chairman*: Can you give us any information that will be useful to us—for instance, as to introducing white labour into the country? I do not know whether I could.
6559. Have you had any experience of the class of labour available here in the past? Yes.
6560. What opinion did you form of that? I did not find it very satisfactory. I had my cane cut by white labour once. It was the company's gang, and not mine. They were to cut all the cane, but they went away and left it, and I had to cut it myself.
6561. Then your experience of white labour is not satisfactory? No. There were some good men, but a lot of them were very poor men.
6562. You have had many years' experience as a cane farmer? Yes; ten years.
6563. Do you think the wages your union offer ought to be sufficient to attract good men? I think so.
6564. Do you know anything about Polynesians? I have always employed Polynesians.
6565. Are any of them working on their own cane here? Yes; a few have small farms and are growing cane on them.
6566. Do you know on what terms they hold those farms? Mostly 1s. per ton royalty.
6567. Are they held for any term of years? I cannot say.
6568. As the representative of your association, is there anything more you can tell us that has not come out in evidence? For my own part, I paid off my kanakas in January, and I have made a change to white labour now; but I am very frightened of it. I left one paddock of 20 acres lying idle that I would have planted under the old conditions, and I do not like doing that. I am planning 35 acres this year, and I think that is too much, when I have to depend on white labour. I hope it will be successful, but I am afraid of it.
6569. Are you afraid of the white labour as white labour, or do you think you will not get good white labour? If I could get good white labour, I would rather have it than black labour.
6570. But you are afraid that you cannot get the quality? I am afraid there is not enough white labour in the country to take the place of the kanakas.
6571. Would it be of any assistance to you, and men like yourself, if there were white labourers settled down here who could work for you for a few months in the year? Yes; then we could have them when we wanted them.
6572. Is there any Crown land around here on which settlements of that kind could be formed? No, not that I know of.

THOMAS STAINES HOWARD, Cane Farmer, examined:

6573. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer.
6574. What is the area of your farm? 73 acres.
6575. How much cane did you cut last year? About 206 tons.
6576. Did you cut it by white or black labour? White.
6577. By contract or day labour? Contract.
6578. What did it cost you to cut? I gave 3s. 6d. a ton for cutting and loading into wagons.
6579. Have you any idea what the men made at that rate? They did not make much.
6580. What did the crop go to the acre? Some of it went 30 tons to the acre, some 15 to 18 tons, and some 5 or 6 tons.
6581. *By Mr. Paget*: Did it average 18 tons? I expect it averaged more than 18 tons.
6582. *By the Chairman*: They did not do very well at it? We did not have enough trucks, with the result that the men were idle half the time. The best day's work they did all the time was about 2 tons.
6583. How much could they have done with cane like that if they had had the trucks? 2½ to 3 tons in some of the cane. I could have done it myself.
6584. Are you registered? Yes.
6585. Have you made any arrangements for the next crushing? I have not a very big crop. My son is working for me, and I shall not want more than one man besides.
6586. You will probably employ a man by day labour? I think so; but I have not come to a conclusion yet. I am a long way off. I have to cart my cane 3 miles, and, if I am not able to get trucks

T. S. Howard.

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T. S. Howard. regularly, there is no use having men working by contract lying idle half the time. Last year the men wanted 5s. for half a day's hoeing while they could not do any cutting, but I would not give them that much.

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6587. What is your experience of the white labour that is available in this district? What I have had up to the present has been very unreliable.
 6588. Do you mean that the men are idle? They were not men who have been accustomed to the work. They seemed to think they should be the bosses.
 6589. If you gave good men 60 acres, do you think they would settle down and make their labour available for you in the crushing season? I think some of the energetic men would do right enough.
 6590. Is there any land within 8 or 10 miles that could be used for the purpose? There are 2,000 acres close to me on Sandy Creek, but that is no good.
 6591. What class of country is it? Clay, and ti-tree swamps.
 6592. Do you know any land within a reasonable distance of your district on the other side of the range? There were some good blocks of land at the foot of the range a good many years ago, but I do not know that they have not been taken up since.

JENS PETER SORENSEN, Cane Farmer, examined:

J. P. Sorensen. 6593. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer.

6594. What acreage have you got? 100 acres.

20 April, 1906. 6595. How much is under cane? 48 acres.

6596. Is the rest of it suitable for cane? Not much of it—only patches.

6597. How much did you cut last year? About 24 acres.

6598. Did you cut it by white labour? Yes.

6599. By contract? Yes.

6600. What did you pay for it? 4s. a ton for cutting plant cane. I cut the ratoons by day labour at 2s. 6d. a week.

6601. *By Mr. Paget:* Was the cane trashed or untrashed? All untrashed.

6602. What did the plant cane average per acre? Last year it averaged about 15 tons.

6603. *By the Chairman:* Are you registered now for the bonus? Yes.

6604. Have you made any arrangements for cutting the present crop? Not yet.

6605. What do you intend to do? I intend to cart it off with a wagon with contract labour, if I can get it.

6606. Have you had any experience of the white labour that is walking about the district seeking employment? On a small scale. I have had no trouble whatever with them; but I have heard a good deal, and seen a bit.

6607. You have engaged men? Yes.

6608. Have they given you satisfaction? So far.

6609. You do not always engage the first man that comes along? I generally have a look at him. If he is disreputable looking I do not engage him.

6610. There are generally enough to pick and choose from? I am situated in a good place where there are a lot of travellers coming by, and I have never yet had any difficulty in getting men.

6611. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you any opinion as to whether there will be sufficient white labour this year, and more particularly next year? I do not anticipate any trouble this year, but later on it will be difficult to get sufficient labour.

6612. We understand that your Farmers' Association has not taken any steps to inquire in any other part of Queensland or Australia as to whether labour can be obtained? I could not say, because lately I have not had a chance of attending the meetings. I am too far away.

6613. If a shortage should occur next year, have you any suggestions to make as to how the deficiency may be supplied? By immigration from the older countries; for instance, from Denmark, Germany, and Scandinavia.

6614. What inducements should be offered to bring people here from those countries? Most of those I know like to settle upon the land in the course of time. They should be paid fair wages, and the Government might enable them to get farms of their own, the same as I have done.

6615. How long have you been in Queensland? Since 1873.

6616. Do you correspond with your friends or relations in Denmark? Not lately.

6617. Are you aware that farm labourers there are now receiving about 12s. a week and found all the year round? I was not aware they were earning quite as much as that.

6618. Supposing they do, do you think the inducements you suggest will be sufficient to bring them from Denmark? Under those circumstances I really do not know that they will, because they can live so much cheaper in Denmark.

6619. Well, you are aware, at any rate, that the population of Denmark is increasing by a very large percentage in recent years, and that the number of persons emigrating from Denmark has decreased greatly of late? I was not aware of that.

6620. That is one of the troubles that face us when we talk of getting people from the northern part of Europe—that they are better off there than they used to be? I did not know that.

6621. Do you think, if inducements could be held out to the working men who are now settled in the districts, that it would keep them here, and that they would be available for a time at least for those who are already engaged in the industry? It would be an inducement to a few, but I do not think it would be any inducement to the majority.

6622. *By Mr. Paget:* Suppose a few could be induced to settle down, do you think that would attract others around them? It might.

6623. We know that the nomadic instinct gets into men once they start to walk about and look for work, but do you not think it might attract some of them to establish homes of their own? It is probable it might, but I could not say.

6624. *By Mr. Nielson:* You are aware that persons can still nominate immigrants from the old country if they wish to do so? Yes; I understand so.

6625. There are a large number of Scandinavians in the Mackay district? Yes.

6626. Can you tell me if they avail themselves of the nominated system? I do not know.

6627. Have you been a resident of the Mackay district for many years? Yes.
6628. Do you know the outside district well? Not a great deal.
6629. Do you know if there are any Crown lands here which could be cut up into agricultural selections? *J. P. Sorensen.*
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6630. Do you know any other? Most of the land at Nebo and out Fort Cooper way is good for farms, but not for cane-growing.
6631. Is it good for any agriculture? Yes, it will grow very good cereals and those things.
6632. *By Mr. Paget:* What distance from Mackay is it? Well, over 60 miles, at any rate.
6633. Is it over the range? Yes.
6634. *By Mr. Nielson:* If it was cut up, do you think it would be selected? I should be inclined to think it would be selected.
6635. If the land was cut up, do you think that the knowledge that they could get work here in the sugar-crushing season, and a chance to settle on this land, would attract any of the selectors from the South, or from the other States. I think it would. The only drawback would be that if you put them on little farms they would all have to sink wells.
6636. *By the Chairman:* Is there no water on the Fort Cooper country? Not much.
6637. Would they get it by sinking? There would be no difficulty about sinking.
6638. *By Mr. Nielson:* What size do you suggest that the farms should be? Do you mean if he goes out to work?
6639. Suppose that a man wants to be a settler? They are no good to the labourer. If you settle men there, you want them to make a living for themselves.
6640. Yes; when they have earned enough to carry on the farm? There is good land there.
6641. In what sizes should that class of land be cut up? I do not know much about that. I have been in sugar districts all the time, and I have had no experience of men who require land for general farms; but friends of mine say that a man can make a good living on 50 to 200 acres.
6642. I am looking for the working men who have a desire to be farmers later on, as soon as they earn the money to do so? I thought you were looking for men to provide labour.
6643. You know it was the desire to get land which caused the bulk of the immigrants to leave Europe? Yes.
6644. You think there is land available within 100 miles of Mackay? Yes; but not for sugar-cane growing.
6645. There are lots of other things that could be grown besides sugar? Yes.
6646. *By the Chairman:* What distance is it—60 miles? Yes; 50 or 60 miles.
6647. Is there a good road? That could be made.
6648. *By Mr. Nielson:* If the people came, they would soon get a road? Yes.
6649. Have you any special ideas of your own that you could give to us? Not that I can think of, except to say that, in my opinion, if the bounty is withdrawn from the sugar industry, it will be a failure. I started with white labour fourteen or fifteen years ago, and I had to give it best because of the low price of cane.
6650. Do you think that the price which you are now getting for your cane and the bounty is sufficient to enable the industry to be carried on with white labour if the labour is available? Yes, if they accept a reasonable rate of wages.
6651. *By the Chairman:* If they accept what you paid yourself last year? Yes.
6652. You think the industry can pay under those conditions? Yes, with the present bounty.

FRANK JAMES STEVENS, Cane Farmer, examined:

F. J. Stevens.

6653. *By the Chairman:* What area is your farm? 390 acres of freehold and 25 acres of leasehold.
6654. How much have you got under cane? About 8.5 acres under cultivation.
6655. How much did you cut last year? I cut 45 acres and got 500 tons.
6656. White or black labour? Coloured labour. I used Chinamen last year.
6657. What do you consider it cost you per ton? 4s. 6d. all round. I paid 3s. per ton for contract and 5s. a day for day labour, and they all found themselves.
6658. Are you registered now? Yes.
6659. Have you made any arrangements to take any cane off this year? Not as yet. I cannot say yet whether I shall take it off with white labour—that is, with my own family labour and one or two hands—or whether I shall make terms with the company.
6660. *By Mr. Paget:* How much do you expect to cut this year? About 600 tons.
6661. You take it off in wagons? Yes.
6662. You cart, lift on to the wagon, and load into the trucks? There is no carting with the trucks. The company puts a little branch line into each holding, and we run the trucks straight on to the line and send them out to the main line.
6663. *By the Chairman:* You are a native of Brisbane? Yes.
6664. What do you think of the class of white labour available here—that is, the travelling labour—Have you had any of it? A little.
6665. What do you think of it? It is very uncertain. Drink is the chief obstacle to the reliability of white labour.
6666. Are you a total abstainer? As long as I have lived, I have never had a taste of drink in my mouth.
6667. And you think it is the intemperate habits of the men that make them unreliable? Yes.
6668. *By Mr. Paget:* A large number are intemperate? Yes. I think it is a scandal to see the number of public-houses that were allowed to increase in this district as soon as the bounty came into force.
6669. *By the Chairman:* But you have it all in your own hands—You should put the local option clause into force to prevent any increase in the number of hotels here? They are taking advantage of that now, and we carried a vote in No. 2 Division of the Pioneer Shire to prevent any increase in the number of hotels.
6670. Have you any other suggestions to make? You could not put in a gang of fifteen men without having the drink trouble to contend with.

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F. J. Stevens: 6671. *By Mr. Nielson*: Amongst some of them? Well, it breaks up the whole gang, as the steady men will not be humbugged by those who drink. These men may break out at any time and break up the gang. I helped a neighbour of mine on one occasion, and sent over my gang to take his cane off. They cut down 70 tons of cane and then went away on the drunk. That man had to get his cane loaded the best way he could.

6672. *By Mr. Paget*: You were looking after a gang on the co-operative system for a number of farmers? I was not in that. The men failed to load my neighbour's cane, and when he asked them what he was going to do with the cane that had been cut they said that he could do what he liked with it.

6673. In your experience, there is not so much trouble in this respect with the settlers in the district who go to work? No.

6674. Do you know if the men who are walking about at the present time could be induced to make homes for themselves—would it improve their condition, and improve the condition of the industry in that respect? It might, but I cannot see how they are to be induced to make homes for themselves. They might have homes made for them if the Government would do it for them.

6675. *By Mr. Nielson*: How did other men make homes for themselves who had no Government to do it for them? Men like us?

6676. I do not know whether you started as a working man or not? Yes; I started as a wage-earner and worked my way up. I was a steady young fellow, and as soon as I got a few pounds together I took up land, got married, and went to live on my land.

6677. Do you not think that there are a number of steady young men now who are single? Lots of them.

6678. *By the Chairman*: Why cannot they do what you did—Do you remember how the Darling Downs and West Moreton districts were settled under the Act of 1868? I really do not remember.

6679. They took up selections of not more than 160 acres, went out shearing and doing other work to earn cheques, which they spent in improving their holdings? Yes; they worked their way up.

6680. They are all well-to-do now? They had to get advances from storekeepers or other people, and we had to do the same here. If we had not the company here, we could not carry on.

6681. *By Mr. Nielson*: Farmers' sons from the Logan and from the Northern Rivers district come here to work—If some inducement were offered them to settle in the sugar districts, do you not think they would remain here? I often wonder why they do not stop at home and settle in their own districts.

6682. *By the Chairman*: The trouble is that they cannot get land in their own districts? They go back as soon as the season is over.

6683. *By Mr. Nielson*: They leave the money they earn here and then come back the following season? We shall never settle the Mackay district in that way.

6684. Can you show them that it will pay them to settle here? I take it there is lots of land if it can be made available.

6685. *By the Chairman*: Where is it? In private hands.

6686. Are there any Crown lands? I think the eyes of the country have been picked out.

6687. *By Mr. Nielson*: How would you make the private lands you speak of available? I have never studied the question. I suppose there are only two ways of doing it. One is for the owners to cut up the land and finance the farmers who take up the farms until they get on their feet. The other is for the Government to repurchase the land as they are doing in the South.

6688. *By Mr. Paget*: The cutting up of private lands, and the financing of farmers, was initiated by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company in this district? Yes.

6689. It has been a great success? No one can deny that it has been an undoubted success.

6690. Practically, the whole of the land that the company bought is now in the hands of small farmers? Yes, but it needs a lot of capital.

6691. It is a very big company with a very large capital? The company found a great number of their tenant farmers in rations for two or three years after they came on to the land.

6692. They also provided them with implements and live stock? Yes, and pretty well everything they got.

6693. The farmers in some instances took over part of the working plant of the company, sufficient to work their farms? Yes.

6694. That necessarily meant that the company had a very large amount of capital invested in a different way to what they had it invested before? Yes, it was invested through the farmers.

6695. *By the Chairman*: Do you know the Fort Cooper lands? No.

6696. If men were settled on that land, do you not think they might earn a cheque in the crushing season in this district? I am very much afraid of it.

6697. *By Mr. Nielson*: Why? Look at the settlement on the Alice river. What has become of it?

6698. *By Mr. Paget*: That was a co-operative settlement, and what is now proposed is not co-operative? The Alice River settlement was co-operative.

6699. Where is labour to be found to make good the shortage which will be caused when 6,000 kanakas are withdrawn from the industry? The kind of settlement of which Mr. Ranking spoke as having taken place on the Darling Downs and in the West Moreton district was tried a good deal in this district in the past. A great deal of the country that is now under sugar was bush when I first came here twenty-seven years ago.

6700. *By the Chairman*: By whom was it taken up? By small selectors.

6701. They made a success of it? Yes.

6702. Why cannot it be repeated now? The country gets occupied. Men I could depend on fifteen years ago to take off my crop are farming now.

6703. That is a good thing, and you are glad of it? I am.

6704. Why will you not give the next man a chance? Where is the supply of labour to come from? When the best of them are on the land, only the riff-raff will be left.

6705. *By Mr. Nielson*: There are always more growing up? It would make you sick to come down the road and see the men about the hotel on a Sunday afternoon. How can men like that be fit to go to work on Monday morning?

6706. *By the Chairman*: It would be folly to try to settle men like that, but all our fellow creatures are not like that? I hope not.

6707. There are lots of good men about the Logan and the Northern rivers of New South Wales, who cannot get land in their own districts—Would they not come and settle here if they got the chance? I suppose they would if they saw any inducement.

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6708. If they come up and you talk in this pessimistic way, I am afraid they will go back? I do not think I am talking in a pessimistic way. I am telling you the conditions as we have to contend with them. We must have labour before we can carry on.

6709. If you had men like that, you would get their labour for two or three years before they could stand alone? I am afraid not. It would take them all their time to work their own places.

6710. By Mr. Nielson: But they would need to earn money from other farmers before they could work their own land? I am afraid they would make a poor show if they were working for me.

6711. How did people manage when you were young?—There was only a limited number of people to finance them in those days? They always found someone to do it. Pettigrew, and Cribb and Foote, in Ipswich, kept the whole country round there.

6712. They did a great deal, but I do not think either of those firms helped people who did not help themselves? No.

6713. The men went out to work, brought back cheques, and spent the money on their own land? Yes. The farming there is different to farming up here, though. Sugar is an all-the-year-round crop, while they could get in their potatoes and maize in four months.

6714. That is what the labourer we are speaking of would do, and, whilst his potatoes and corn were growing, he would come and work for you? I am not hopeful of it. If you put them on the wheat lands—if they are wheat lands—on the other side of the range, they would be no more use to us than if they were in China.

6715. If you are afraid that labour will be short, where do you suggest getting it from? I think that the Government that sends the labour away should provide labour to take its place.

6716. Supposing they will not do that, where do you propose getting it from? I do not know any place except Europe.

6717. By the Chairman: Do you advocate immigration? Yes; on a scale something like it was when Mr. George Randall was at home. We do not want them to send out shiploads of wasters from the low parts of the big cities; but if we send home men who know the class of labour we want they can get plenty.

6718. Do you not think a great deal might be done by people in Queensland nominating friends or acquaintances as assisted immigrants? They would not do that unless they could bind those they nominated to work for them when they arrived in Queensland, and that the Commonwealth law prohibits.

6719. It did, but it has been altered, and there is no reason why you should not make a contract with a man under certain conditions? I was not aware that they had made that change.

6720. Is your association only formed to meet at night and "do a pitch"? We do a lot more than that.

6721. Well, here is one of the chief things that concern you, and your association does not seem to bother about it? We took it in hand as soon as the trouble arose.

6722. By the Chairman: But you do not appear to be familiar with the most recent legislation on the subject? Is Mr. Swayne not aware of it?

6723. By Mr. Nielson: Not until I showed it to him the other day in the Court-house in Mackay? We have not much time for reading.

6724. You have officials to hunt up this sort of thing for you—If you can show the Minister in charge of this department in the Commonwealth that there is a difficulty in procuring within the Commonwealth workers of at least equal ability to what you had before, and you submit the agreements that you propose to make, there will be no difficulty in getting the labour you require from outside the Commonwealth—If he approves of that he will give a permit to make as many contracts as you like? Yes; but it is a difficult thing to convince the Minister of that.

6726. By the Chairman: You have never tried—If you told the Minister that you had to find the labour to replace 5,000 kanakas, would not that convince him? I tackled Mr. Kidston when he was here, and he said there were plenty of men in the South.

6728. By Mr. Paget: Has your association taken any steps towards dealing with the shortage of labour this year? We have not really taken up the question of finding a substitute for the kanakas further than a general discussion among the individual members. One would advocate immigration, and so on.

6729. In view of the position that it seems is going to arise, are you aware that two men came up in the steamer "Wyandra," who were authorised to speak for thirty, forty, or fifty men in one small place in the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales? I heard something about them.

6730. Mr. Barlow, one of the men, said that the men he represented were a fine class of men, and he stated there were plenty available? That looks to me like robbing Peter to pay Paul.

6731. But those are men who cannot get work down there? If there are plenty of good men looking for work, they will not have much difficulty in finding it here.

6732. By Mr. Nielson: Do you not think that, if the farmers are enterprising enough to send men up here to look for work, you should be enterprising enough to send men to look for labour? It takes us all our time to live, and we could not afford to send out a representative.

6733. It would not be much, as you could put a few "bob" together, and send a man away to look for labour? We send men away to the conference every year, but the Government do not take much notice of what is done at the conference.

6734. By the Chairman: But you can do this for yourself—You should acquaint yourself with the labour, and find out where it is? We have the labour here now, and it is not our fault that it is being taken away.

6735. By Mr. Paget: But we must take the position as it is—Can you give us any suggestions as to the best method by which the kanakas may be deported with the least expense and the least inhumanity? Whose duty is it to deport them?

6736. By Mr. Nielson: We do not know anything about that? I would like to know.

6737. By the Chairman: Perhaps you have never considered the matter? I have considered it this far: Lots of "boys" have broken their agreements since the beginning of the year, so why have they not gone home?

6738. They are going as fast as vessels can take them? I did not know that.

- F. J. Stevens. 6739. *By Mr. Nielson*: The law only comes into force on the 1st of January? If the Government agents put on a little pressure they would get them away.
6740. I am aware of that, and we have discovered that in the last week or two? It shows neglect on the part of the department that the "boys" are not sent away as fast as they are at liberty to go.
6741. Do you think the Polynesian inspector of this district could have persuaded the "boys" to have gone home if he had taken the trouble to do so? I do not see why he should not, as he has a great deal of influence with the "boys." The old hands are pretty knowing, but with those who have not been here very long—say from three to five years—I think they could have pretty well enforced their return as soon as their agreements were broken.
6742. Do you think any advice given by the Polynesian inspector would have been acted on by the "boys"? Yes, I think so.
6743. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you know that it was stated in town this week, in evidence, that there were now some thirty or forty islanders disengaged in the district, and that was all? I did not hear that.
6744. *By Mr. Nielson*: But it was also stated that the rest of them walked about until their money was done, and then they were compelled to go to work again? They were disengaged then.
6745. Yes; they were just like myself in this respect: I would not like to go back to Denmark penniless, and they do not want to go back to their islands in the same state? They should not be allowed to go about in crowds.
6746. *By the Chairman*: Have you anything more to add? No; I know nothing whatever about the islands.
6747. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you offer any suggestions about shipping? I think the Government should fix some age limit or residence limit, and all who come within that limit should not be sent home.
6748. *By the Chairman*: What would you fix as the limit? That is rather a problem.
6749. *By Mr. Nielson*: We only want your idea, as even our suggestions might not be acted on? I should think that from ten to fourteen years should be the limit.
6750. *By the Chairman*: You suggest that the "boys" who have been here from ten to fourteen years should be allowed to remain if they wish to? Yes.
6751. Then, what would they do if they remained here? The Government would have to provide regulations that they should be able to earn their living. They should be allowed to earn their living on the same terms as the white men. It would only be a matter of time until they ceased altogether. Some of them would be sure to go home, and the others would die.
6752. *By Mr. Paget*: You think some would drift home? Yes; they would gradually drift home when they had got a little means. I understand that several of the "boys" have interests in the islands, and I know one "boy" who went home from here to work his coffee plantation in the islands. He started it by his earnings here, and he went home and took charge of it himself.
6753. You are an old resident of this district, and you have taken a great interest in the islanders? Yes.
6754. Are you continuing your mission teaching? Yes.
6755. How many scholars have you? About twenty to twenty-five.
6756. Can you tell us if any islanders are settled on farms in this immediate district? Yes.
6757. How many? It is hard to tell how many are holding farms, or how many are working for them. There was a funeral the other day, and about forty or fifty "boys" rolled up. I do not know where they all came from, and most of them were their own masters, so far as their time was concerned.
6758. How many farmers are there—about ten or a dozen? About that.
6759. You do not know a great deal about them? No.
6760. *By Mr. Nielson*: In some cases a "boy" may take up a lot of land, and afterwards work with his mates on shares? Yes; I know that the others chip in.
6761. And it is hard to know how many are interested in them? Yes, it is hard.
6762. *By Mr. Paget*: How many are married? Not many of them.
6763. Are any married to white women? I do not think so.
6764. Do the children of kanakas attend school? I do not think so. The question was raised in connection with the Honebush school, and it was decided that they should not be allowed to attend.
6765. *By Mr. Nielson*: Who decided that—the Government? No; it was decided on a vote of the parents of the children who attended the school.
6766. *By Mr. Paget*: Is there anything further that you can suggest that would minimise any hardship that would accrue to these islanders from being deported, as you have been a missionary amongst them and have had many years' experience? This problem never had to be faced before.
6767. But, unfortunately, it has to be faced now? I think the "boys" have a right to be considered, although there is a bad influence at work amongst them just now.
6768. *By Mr. Nielson*: In what way? Urging the "boys" to reprisals. You see what they are threatening now. They say that if they have to leave Queensland, then all the white men will have to leave the islands.
6769. *By the Chairman*: That is tall talk? Yes; but it might do harm.
6770. Let us hope it is only talk? I must try to do something to counteract it.
6771. *By Mr. Nielson*: How do you think this bad influence is engendered? That I could not say. One or two white men have been attending their meetings, but whether they have had a bad influence I do not know.

GEORGE WINDSOR, Cane Farmer, examined:

- G. Windsor. 6772. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer.
6773. What is the area of your farm? 80 acres.
6774. How much have you under cane? About 40 acres.
6775. How much did you cut last year? 380 tons.
6776. By white or black labour? White labour.
6777. By contract or day labour? By day labour.
6778. What did you pay? 2s. 6d. a week and tucker. Of course, I included myself.
6779. Did you ever estimate what the cane cost to cut, allowing for your own labour? Something under 3s. a ton.
6780. *By Mr. Paget*: Was it trashed or untrashed? Untrashed.

6781. What was about the average? Some of the plant cane went 23 tons; the ratoons went about 7 G. Windsor. tons. The average was about 14 tons.

6782. *By the Chairman*: Are you registered now? Yes.

6783. Have you made any arrangements for cutting this year? Only my own labour—myself and three sons—and I need one man.

6784. *By Mr. Nielson*: How old are your boys? The eldest is twenty years of age, and the others are fourteen and twelve.

6785. *By Mr. Paget*: You are practically independent of outside labour? Yes. I do not intend to grow any more cane than I can cut with my own labour.

6786. You feel rather fortunate in that respect? Yes. For two years running I planted 30 acres. This year I am only planting 10 acres.

6787. *By the Chairman*: Could you not get plenty white labour if you liked? You can get men, but some of them are no good, though I could not wish for a better man than I had last year.

6788. *By Mr. Nielson*: Can you not get him back again? I dare say I could if I wanted him. He is working for another farmer in the meantime, as I had no work for him. He was only a new chap who came from Rockhampton.

6789. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you given any thought to the future labour supply for the industry? I am very dubious about it. I do not think there will be enough good men. If we could offer them inducements to come, we might get men.

6790. *By the Chairman*: Can you suggest inducements? The only thing I can suggest is that land should be cut up so that men might be settled on it.

6791. Can you tell us of any Crown lands that could be used for that purpose? There is some good land at Jolimont and St. Helens, but it is a good way off.

6792. Is it Crown land? Yes.

6793. How far away is it? About 30 miles. The St. Helens land is 50 miles away.

6794. *By Mr. Paget*: What about cutting up the Seaforth Estate, which is a good deal nearer? The Government have that in their hands.

6795. Have you ever seen that land? No. It is not more than 25 miles from Mackay.

6796. But it is not as far as that from a great number of the sugar-growers in the locality? No.

6797. It is only 9 or 10 miles away, is it not? It must be more than that from Farleigh. Habana is about 9 miles away.

6798. I am speaking of suppliers to the Marian and Farleigh mills—some of them are 5 or 6 miles nearer to Seaforth? Some of them are 8 miles nearer Seaforth.

6799. *By the Chairman*: What area would you suggest for the holdings you speak of? I have not thought that out; but, if you gave a man an area like 150 acres, he immediately turns into a farmer. He would be no good then as a cane-cutter.

6800. What should be the smallest area? I should not like to suggest any area.

6801. You must give every man the same chances that you had? I should say 25 acres of good land would be a fair area to start with. If he was pushing, when he got a freehold, he could take up another piece. Those are the sort of men we want to get in this district.

6802. Do you know anything about the Fort Cooper land? Not much, but I should think it would be too far away. There are very bad roads to Fort Cooper.

6803. Have you any suggestions to offer with regard to the deportation of Pacific Islanders? I think it is a jolly shame that the "boys" have to be sent away.

6804. Can you suggest any means for mitigating any hardship they might suffer? What the Government should have done at first was to give a good bonus, and not say anything about the "boys" at all, and those who employed kanakas would gradually have let them go, and there would have been none of this trouble.

6805. *By Mr. Nielson*: But we are here to inquire how to do the thing that the law says is to be done?

I cannot give any suggestion as to how to send them away.

6806. *By the Chairman*: You heard Mr. Stevens say that it would be well to induce as many as were disengaged, and who were willing to go away, to leave before the end of the year—Would you approve of that? No. I should not like to send the labour away. I came to the country of my own free will, while the kanakas were fetched here, and, if they wish to stop, it is only fair that they should be allowed to do so.

6807. *By Mr. Nielson*: We are not inquiring into whether they should stop or whether they should not, but how they should go? I have no suggestion to offer as to how they should go.

6808. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you want to say? We had to send south ten years ago, and we paid men's passages up here for the season, and they were not a success. We sent for a gang of fifteen or nineteen men.

6809. *By Mr. Paget*: Was that the co-operative experiment tried by the farmers of Homebush? Yes; some of those men are among our best cane-cutters. We had to pay their passages up, but they repaid them.

6810. *By the Chairman*: But a portion of them were undesirable? Some of them were very good men; others were not worth their tucker.

6811. In any section of the community do you not find a certain proportion who are worse than the others? Yes. The people in the South think that numbers of the people who are walking about should be able to go to work; but they could not do a day's work if you paid them £2 a week.

6812. Can you suggest any means by which good men can be induced to come and stop here, or to come regularly at the busy season? We have offered them good wages as an inducement; and the Government might cut up Crown lands to give them holdings. But it is no good cutting up swamps; it should be good land.

6813. *By Mr. Paget*: If the industry were not protected to the extent it now is, would you be able to pay what you now consider fair wages? Certainly not, if we were not getting the bonus.

6814. *By the Chairman*: You consider the bonus is necessary? Yes. Until a few years ago, after you paid your men on a Saturday, they would go to the hotel, and never turn up again till the following Thursday. You could not keep them away from the "pub."

DONALD BEATON, Selector, examined:

- D. Beaton. 6815. *By the Chairman*: Did you grow any cane last year? No.
6816. Have you lived long in this district? I have lived here for forty-three years.
- 20 April, 1906. 6817. And you know something about it? Yes.
6818. You know a good deal about the sugar-cane industry? I helped to plant the first plants in the district.
6819. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you here as the representative of the Sugar Workers' Union? No. I was asked by the secretary to represent them, but I have got no credentials.
6820. Are you a member of the Sugar Workers' Union? No. I am a member of the Workers' Political Organisation.
6821. Would you like to give evidence as the representative of the Sugar Workers' Union, as the secretary asked you? If you have any questions to put I will answer them.
6822. What is it you wish to particularly give evidence upon—Is it with reference to the scale of wages, or the methods of living here? So far as the labour is concerned, I understand that the two bodies have come to an agreement, and they have settled upon a scale of wages which I think is very fair.
6823. *By the Chairman*: That is the scale of wages arrived at by the Farmers' Association and the Sugar Workers' Union? Yes.
6824. You think it would be reasonable on the part of the union to confirm those wages? Yes.
6825. *By Mr. Paget*: You are not a canegrower? I have been one, but I am not one at the present time. I had to give it up through ill-health. I am interested in canegrowing because there is a man who pays me a royalty to grow cane on my selection.
6826. But at the present time you are not growing cane yourself? No. When a man gets up to seventy-two years of age it is time for him to stop.
6827. You have had a very long residence in this district, and you have a good general knowledge of the cost of canegrowing and cultivation? Yes.
6828. In order to pay that scale of wages, which you think is a fair one, do you think it necessary that the bounty system should be continued? I think it would be all for the best.
6829. But suppose the protection was abolished, would the canegrower, in your opinion, be able to carry on? If the other circumstances were what I might call in a prosperous way, I think the industry could be carried on with out a bonus.
6830. What do you mean by other circumstances? I reckon if the central mill is put up by the Government, and carried on by the Government in different localities to assist the growers, they can do without the bonus.
6831. That is in competition with the world? Yes, it would be competition with the world. The population of Australia will be increasing, and they will consume more sugar.
6832. If you remove the present protection on sugar, then the ports of the Commonwealth are open to the sugar that is grown by black labour in other parts of the world? Do you mean that it would be free-trade?
6833. No; what I wish to ask you is, if the present bounty on sugar is done away with, can the farmers carry on in the industry? Yes, under certain circumstances I think they can. If what I said would happen, I think they could employ white labour just the same as now.
6834. Without the bounty? Yes; without the bonus. I do not say that the ports should be thrown open to the world without any Customs duties. We had Customs duties to pay before the bonus came in, and I paid them on everything that went into my store or on my body.
6835. Before the advent of the Commonwealth the sugar from Queensland went into the other Australian colonies in direct competition with sugar grown in other parts of the world, but now the Queensland sugar is protected; and I want to know if you would like to see the protection removed? No; I would not mind if the protection stopped there for ever, as far as that goes, and the bonus as well.
6836. Would you like to tell us anything about the supply of labour, for you know that a large number of Polynesians will not be allowed to work here after the end of this year? Well, some eleven years ago the Workers' Association which I belonged to drew out a scheme for the settlement of the people on small areas of land. They petitioned Parliament through Mr. Dalrymple, who presented the petition to Parliament. I consider that if such a petition had been adopted at that time by the Government, there would have been any amount of good reliable labour in this district at the present time. If it had been adopted, it would have been a good thing for the future.
6837. Is that the scheme that Mr. Fudge brought under my notice last session? I believe so. I believe a reserve at Bowen Crossing is being cut up into the areas which we approved of.
6838. Does your organisation approve of the scheme? Yes, so far as I know. I believe there are two reserves to be cut up.
6839. Do you think the area that has been suggested by your organisation will be sufficient to allow a man to make a home? Yes—that is, a man who depends upon his labour. There are people labouring in this district who have small allotments in the suburbs of Mackay, to which they return on Saturday night. They are far better off than if they had to pay rent. I have known men in this district who perhaps only earned 15s. a week, and they have had to pay 8s. a week rent. If a man had 5 acres, he might be able to grow 2 or 3 acres of cane in the slack time, and, putting it at 15 or 20 tons to the acre, and at the present price of cane, it would be a great addition to his wages.
6840. *By the Chairman*: Do you think 5 acres of good land would be enough? It would be as much as he could work, with the assistance of his family. A man with 30, 40, or 160 acres has no time to labour for other people.
6841. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you anything further you would like to say? I do not believe the stories you hear about the horrible massacres that are going to be perpetrated when the "boys" go back to their islands.
6842. It has been said that some islanders, who have returned to the islands, on finding that their friends had died, have been afraid to land, and have come back to Queensland, and re-engaged? If I returned to Scotland I should be in the same predicament, as all my friends are dead or gone. The only cases in which there might be hardship are those of "boys" who have married white women. It is hard that they and their progeny should be deported. I think they should receive consideration.

6843. Would you extend consideration to islanders who are married to women belonging to other islands? No. D. Beaton.
6844. Would it not be a hardship to part husband and wife? You need not part them. Why cannot you land them together? 20 April, 1906.
6845. We are told that difficulty will arise where a man or a woman is landed on an island to which they do not belong? That is the lookout of the parties who land them. As far as my knowledge goes, that is an old trick to get them to come back here, but the situation has altered now.
6846. *By the Chairman:* Do you know the Port Cooper lands? Yes; I lived there for years.
6847. What do you think of them? Are they suitable for homesteads of 50 to 160 acres? There is a good deal of it that is good land, but it is short of water sometimes.
6848. Are you aware that you can get water, by sinking, at a reasonable depth? Yes.
6849. *By Mr. Paget:* They get water at 80 feet? Yes; as far out as Logan Down. It is all good land out there. I have been a bit of a farmer myself, in Victoria and South Australia, and I found as good soil out back of Mackay as I found anywhere in those other places.
6850. *By the Chairman:* What is the elevation there? About 900 feet.
6851. Is it heavily timbered land? No; beautiful open country. It is downs country. Of course, there are ironbark ridges on it. It would be good grazing country, which is necessary for farmers.
6852. What do you think they could grow out there? They could grow wheat. There is a better rainfall up there than there is where they grow wheat in South Australia at the back of Port Augusta and Mount Remarkable.
6853. *By Mr. Paget:* What is about the distance for carriage—50 or 100 miles? From here to Port Cooper it is 83 miles, and that would be a good way to cart grain. But there is good land at Blipinstone and on Suttor Creek.
6854. *By the Chairman:* Would men settle up there? Yes.
6855. We would have to give them bigger areas than .5 acres? Yes; in some instances they would require as much as a square mile. I would not limit it to small areas.

SIGGES, a Native of Lifu, examined:

Sigges.

20 April, 1906.

6856. *By Mr. Paget:* How many years have you been here? I came here in 1871.
6857. Where did you come to first? Brisbane. I came on a three years' agreement.
6858. Where did you work? I signed on at Brisbane for Mackay.
6859. And you have been here ever since? No; I have been all over Queensland.
6860. Are you married? Yes.
6861. To a white woman? Yes.
6862. What country does your wife belong to? She is an Englishwoman.
6863. How many children have you got? Four.
6864. How old are they? The biggest is twelve years old.
6865. Were you married in a church? Yes, in the Catholic Church.
6866. *By the Chairman:* What do you do now? I am a farmer.
6867. Have you got land of your own? No; it is rented land.
6868. Do you pay a royalty? No; I pay £20 a year.
6869. How much land have you got? 50 acres.
6870. What do you grow? Sugar-cane.
6871. How long does your lease run—is it from year to year, or have you got it for so many years? I have had that land for twelve years now.
6872. When is your lease up? I have no lease.
6873. Then, you took it from year to year? Yes.
6874. *By Mr. Paget:* Where is this land? Chelona, in Beaton's paddock.
6875. *By the Chairman:* You do not want to go home? If they send the other "boys," I will go too. If I am compelled to go, I will go.
6876. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you a French subject? Yes; and I do not want to go home.
6877. But you have got a ticket and you need not go home? What is the good of a ticket if these people will not employ me?
6878. But you have got land? I would like to have a piece of land from the Government.
6879. If the Government made reserves would you go there? Yes, if they gave me 100 acres for myself.
6880. *By Mr. Nielson:* Why will the people not employ you? They won't.
6881. *By Mr. Paget:* You are an exempt "boy," and you can work at anything—you have got a ticket under the old Act? Yes.
6882. You can work at anything you like? But these men will not employ any coloured labour now. They would not get the rebate if they employed me.
6883. *By the Chairman:* What are your children—boys or girls? Three boys and one girl.
6884. If the Government gave you land would you make a nice farm? Yes; I want to make it freehold.
6885. *By Mr. Paget:* What are all these other "boys" here—are they all farmers? Yes.
6886. What are they growing—cane? Yes; they are growing cane for the sugar company.
6887. On Sandy Creek? Yes.

NOAH SABBOT, Son of Pacific Island parents, examined:

Noah Sabbot.

20 April, 1906.

6888. *By the Chairman:* Where were you born? I am a native of Queensland. I was born at the Proserpine.
6889. Is your father alive? Yes; but my mother is dead.
6890. What island did your father belong to? Api.
6891. How old are you? Twenty-two years.
6892. *By Mr. Nielson:* Has your father got a ticket? No.
6893. Do you know how long your father has been in Queensland? Yes; for nearly thirty years.
6895. *By the Chairman:* What are you doing? Farming.

Noah Sabbot. 6896. Leased land? Yes.

6897. How much? 35 acres.

20 April, 1906. 6898. What do you grow? Cane.

6899. Do you pay rent or royalty? I pay a royalty of 1s. per ton.

6900. *By Mr. Paget:* How long have you been growing cane? Six years.

6901. At the same place? Yes.

6902. Would you like to go to Api? I would like to go and come back again.

6903. *By Mr. Nielson:* You would like to go for a trip? Yes.

6904. Does your father want to go back to his own island? He would like to go and see the country, and then come back to Queensland again.

6905. *By the Chairman:* What do the other "boys" want you to tell us? They say that if they are obliged to go they have ploughs, horses, and implements, and a bit of cane, and they do not know what they are going to do with them.

6906. How many of the boys have farms? About sixteen.

6907. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many of them have got tickets? Three.

6908. How long have they been in Queensland? I could not say.

6909. *By Mr. Paget:* How many years have they been growing cane? Two of them have been growing it nearly as long as I have.

6910. How many have been growing it for one year? I do not think there are any. They have all been growing cane for two or three years.

6911. *By Mr. Nielson:* Mr. Hornbrook knows about it? Yes. He is keeping their leases for them. I have mine at home.

6912. Mr. Hornbrook has nothing to do with you? No.

6913. *By the Chairman:* Are there any other "boys" here who were born in Queensland? There are a good few of them.

6914. *By Mr. Nielson:* Grown-up chaps? Yes, grown up like me.

6915. *By Mr. Paget:* Are any of them farming with you? Not any of the native chaps.

6916. *By the Chairman:* Can you read and write? Yes.

6917. Where did you learn? I went to the State school in town.

6918. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have any of the "boys" here got their agreements or leases? I do not think any of them fetched them.

6919. Have you been telling them that they might have to go home? People have been saying they have to go home.

6920. *By the Chairman:* Are there many who want to go, and who cannot get a ship? There may be plenty in town.

6921. You do not know any? No.

6922. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you go to town much? Not often. I was in last week.

6923. You do not yarn much to the fellows in town? No.

6924. *By the Chairman:* Have you got a banking account? No.

6925. *By Mr. Nielson:* Are you married? No.

6926. Is there anything that these "boys" want you to tell us in particular? No, that is all.

6927. Mr. Hornbrook can give us all the particulars as to how long they have been here? Yes.

6928. Do any of the "boys" here want to go home? I do not know—they might.

6929. Have you asked any of them? I suppose they will go home if they get their things sold and get paid for their cane.

6930. *By the Chairman:* But they do not want to go? Not before they get paid for their implements, property, and crop.

6931. *By Mr. Nielson:* There are a lot of "boys" at Rockhampton, some of whom have married white women, and some who have married women belonging to other islands, and they told us that they would like the Government to set apart a big reserve where all the "boys" who have been many years in Queensland could live with their wives and families and farm on their own account—Do you think the old "boys" here would like to do the same? I suppose so, if they could get enough land from the Government.

6932. *By the Chairman:* Would they be willing to live on such reserves? Yes, if you got good land for them.

6933. It might not be sugar land, but land fit for growing corn and potatoes—Would they like small farms of land like that? I suppose so, if they could get a living at it.

6934. *By Mr. Nielson:* All the "boys" who have been many years in Queensland understand farming generally? Yes.

6935. A lot of them understand other things besides growing sugar? Yes.

6936. *By the Chairman:* Will you ask the other "boys" whether they would be willing to live on a big reserve like that—of course, the Government would not allow them to sell the land?

After consultation with the other Pacific Islanders present, Witness said:

They don't like to be shifted about. Where they are now they are growing cane, and they would like to stay there until their leases are up. They would like to stay longer if the landlord will allow them.

6937. Then they would not like to go on to reserves? No.

6938. *By Mr. Nielson:* They want to stay where they are, growing cane? Yes.

FRANK BENNETT, Canecutter, and Representative of the Sugar Workers' Union, examined:

F. Bennett. 6939. *By the Chairman:* Where do you live? Homebush.

6940. Are you farming? No; I am a canecutter.

20 April, 1906. 6941. Do you take contracts? Yes.

6942. Do you come here authorised to speak on behalf of the Sugar Workers' Union? Yes.

6943. Have the union agreed to the scale of wages fixed by the Farmers' Association? No.

6944. When does it come before the union for approval? Within a fortnight.

6945. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think it is likely to be approved of? Certainly not.

6946. What do you think the union would approve of? I think the union would approve of 4s. 6d. a ton for 8 tons and over.

F. Bennett.

20 April, 1906.

6947. *By the Chairman*: All sorts of crops? Eight fous and over.

6948. That would be to cut and load? Yes.

6949. Untrashed cane? Yes; untrashed.

6950. *By Mr. Nielson*: With wagons? 3s. 6d. with wagons. It is all portable trams; the farmers have to lay the lines to the boundaries, and draw the cane on to the main line. The cutter lays all the lines in the paddocks. It is 1s. less for loading into wagons. The contractor has to lay all the portable line, and shove the train on to the main line.

6951. *By the Chairman*: What about other classes of labour in the off season? £1 a week and found.

6952. *By Mr. Paget*: And what for ploughing, hoeing, chipping, and general farmwork? 25s a week for ploughing, £1 a week for hoeing and scarifying, and 25s a week for men engaged in planting during the crushing season.

6953. *By the Chairman*: What price for ordinary work during the crushing season? 25s. a week through the season for ordinary work, such as planting. But for canecutting and horsedriying the wages should be 30s. a week and found.

6954. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many hours a day? Nine and a-half hours a day and four hours on Saturday.

6955. *By the Chairman*: Any other labour? 30s. a week for a horsedriver so long as he is a strong man, as it wants a strong man to drag the plants if he is planting.

6956. *By Mr. Nielson*: We heard yesterday about people taking contracts for cane planting in the off season; can you give us any instance of it? Not in this district.

6957. We were told that at the Marian? Then it would be a very isolated case. The rule here is for the farmer to do his own planting.

6958. *By Mr. Paget*: You said your union would approve of men being paid 30s. a week for canecutting and found? Yes.

6959. On an ordinary crop of 15 to 18 tons per acre, what would you expect a man to cut and load a day at those wages? Two tons a day.

6960. Would that be a fair thing? It would not hurt him to do that, and it would be a fair thing.

6961. What would he cut by contract? Another $\frac{1}{2}$ of a ton put on to that.

6962. You put more work into it by contract? Yes.

6963. *By the Chairman*: That is only human nature? That is right.

6964. Is there anything else you wish to say? There is not sufficient inducement given to white labour.

In a few months we will hear about the shortage of white labour and its unreliability.

6965. What would you suggest—one man said to plant early? That would help it. There are several cases that I could mention where labour could be employed. Those people get the company's gangs of "boys" to do their grubbing for them. That means that some white men are knocked out—men who give every satisfaction in the cutting of the cane.

6966. That will right itself by and by? With regard to the company here, it is only a matter of two months ago they had men on chipping. Rain came, and as it did not abate they told the men that they could wait about, and if the rain ceased they would be put on again. They kept these men for a week and then paid them off. Was that any inducement?

6967. *By Mr. Nielson*: What could they have done other than that? The rain often lasts more than a day or two.

6968. *By the Chairman*: Would it occur to you that the men should pay for half of their tucker? A man hawks his labour and brings it to the farmers' doors. A man gets put on, and if it comes on to rain they will come to you and say, "I would like to keep you on but I really cannot keep you going."

6969. But the employer can get no work done, and the employee can do no work if it is wet? The farmers employ two men at the most. If it came on to rain, it would not be too hard on them to have to find the men in tucker for a week.

6970. *By Mr. Paget*: Did you say the company found the men in fool for a week in two separate instances, and that as the rain continued they put the men off altogether? Yes.

6971. And they told the men if it was fine they would put them on again? Yes.

6972. Could they have put the men on at woodcutting? Yes; they have "boys" bringing wood just now. According to the Pacific Islanders Act the "boys" are not allowed to cut and load wood.

6973. Were they clearing the land? No; they were cutting firewood.

6974. There is a department in town to look after that? Then that shows how Mr. Hornbrook looks after his department.

6975. *By the Chairman*: It is not every man who can cut wood—Would these men cut wood? Yes.

6976. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did you ever complain to the department in town about breaches of the Act being committed? No. It is not everybody who will complain about these things. That has happened to myself. I worked two and a-half days for the company, and left of my own accord, and they charged me 2s. for the use of a kit. They surely did not expect me to eat on the table. They give you £1 a week; and if you use a kit, which cost 6d., they charge you 2s. for the use of it.

6977. *By the Chairman*: Do not men carry a kit about with them? No. According to the Shearers and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act, employers must provide all cooking utensils. The company or its officials will be making a cry soon about the shortage of labour. There never has been a shortage of labour here.

6978. You say if men are made more comfortable they will come? Yes.

6979. *By Mr. Paget*: It has been suggested that a system of discharge certificates might be instituted like there is in force in the pastoral industry? There is a dislike among workers to that sort of thing. We know it is in use in the pastoral industry, but that is not the fault of the men.

6980. If I went to New South Wales I should not get work without a reference, and why should not another man have a reference? It would be different in your case.

6981. But looking at it from a business point of view, do you think it would be a good thing or not for the employers and the workers? I do not think it would be bad, because I do not see where the reference would do any harm.

6982. Do you think it is likely to do good? Yes; because, if a man has a reference, he must be what the reference says he is.

6983. *By Mr. Nielson*: There is nothing at the present time to prevent a man from getting a reference or giving one? No, but it is never asked for.

- F. Bennett. 6984. Have you ever taken contracts yourself? Yes.
6985. Do you engage the men? Yes; share and share alike. I make the arrangements and select my own men; but it is share and share alike. There is no sweating of anything like that.
- 20 April, 1906. 6986. If you new where you could get a contract, and wanted a gang of eight or ten men, and men told you they were cane-cutters, would you not feel more satisfied to take them in as mates, if they could produce a reference showing that they had been cane-cutting before? My word I would. I believe it would be for the mutual benefit of the farmer and the labourer.
6987. Is there any other subject you would like to mention? Under 8 tons would have to be subject to mutual agreement. I noticed in the local Press that they would like to devise some scheme to keep them here. There are a few on the land, and I do not think there would be any objection to their stopping.
6988. Do you think there will be plenty of men in this district next year? All that I can go by is that there has always been a surplusage of labour so far, but this year there will be a greater demand for white labour.
6989. And next year there will be a greater demand still? It will not increase very much next year, because it is practically all white labour this year.
6990. By Mr. Paget: But are you not aware that, although it is practically all registered for the bonus, there are over 900 islanders in this district? Yes; and there are a lot on the walk-about, too.
6991. There are over 900 islanders in employment, and their places must be filled after 31st December? I read in the papers that there were something like 6,000 in the State; but it will not take anything like 6,000 white men to do the same work.
6992. By the Chairman: What proportion of white men do you think will do the work? I think 75 white men would be equal to 100 kanakas.
6993. By Mr. Nielson: Do you think enough white men will be available? I think so. They would not want to get 4,000 here. Now that the kanaka is forced to go, a lot of the farmers' sons have taken their place at cane-cutting, whereas they used to superintend the work before. Years ago at Homebush every farmer had three or four "boys," and some had as many as ten. Now the farmers grow more cane, and they have not got even one "boy" employed. They do it with their own family labour. Their sons do the ploughing, in the cutting season they get labour, and in the planting season they get casual labour when there is a pinch.
6994. But you recognise that next year there will be more white men required in the industry than there are now? Yes; they are now getting on to the crushing, at which season there is always a great influx of labour if the conditions are favourable.
6995. Do you know where those men are at the present time? They are always roving about, and they see by the papers where men are wanted.
6996. Have you worked in any other sugar district? No.
6997. Are you a native of this district? I am not a native of Queensland at all. I have been here for the last three years.
6998. Where did you come from originally? Sydney.
6999. Do you think young men like yourself will come from Sydney if they find there is work in the sugar districts? Yes. I came up in consequence of the accounts I saw in the papers.
7000. Have you been disappointed or otherwise? No; I have always got the highest rates that have been going. I have always made fair money at the cane-cutting, but it would not be at the rates the association is offering.
7001. From your experience, would you feel safe in advising friends in Sydney to come up here? Yes.
7002. If Queensland cannot supply the whole of the requirements, you think plenty men can be got in New South Wales? Yes. The farmers had men cutting last year who gave them every satisfaction; and there are plenty farmers who would give 6d. a ton more to have the same men back again to have things run smoothly.
7003. The men who were cutting last year have gone away? The majority of them will be back again.
7004. Have you any idea where most of them have gone to? There is no inducement for them to stay, but most of the men of my acquaintance went to Thompson's Point, on the Fitzroy River, and to Mount Morgan. They were expecting things to be lively there at Christmas.
7005. Did any of them go to Brisbane? Some of them went over the range, prospecting, and others went to stations on the Peak Downs.
7006. Do any of them go into the pastoral industry in the off season? Yes; just over the range between here and Clermont there are seven or eight stations, and they do a bit of burr-cutting and shed work. Then there is always a bit of gold to be got there.
7007. Are you fairly intimate with many of the class you refer to? Yes.
7008. Is there any desire among them to settle down if they could get farms of their own? They have every desire; but, unfortunately, the eyes of the country have been picked out.
7009. If a tract of first-class agricultural land were opened up within 100 miles of Mackay, would any of those men become settlers? I am sure they would, provided the Government did not grant a public-house license alongside.
7010. That is a matter for the people in the district to decide—the Government do not interfere in that at all—Are these men who would go out and work until they got a bit of money to give them a proper start? It naturally follows they would, because cane-cutting is nearly as hard work as you can get, and men who will work at that for others will work just as well for themselves.
7011. But would they go out working in the cane season just the same after they took up a selection? Yes, because what they earned at cane-cutting would help them on their own land. They could not afford to put in the whole of their time on their own land, because it would be some time before they could get any return from their labour.
7012. Do you think it would be a good thing in the interests of the men themselves to try and settle them on a block of country? It would be very advisable to do so.
7013. What area would you suggest they should be settled upon of good agricultural land? It would all depend on what they were going to raise, but I should say about 60 acres.
7014. By Mr. Paget: Would that be the minimum area? Yes; because they would require to have so much under crop, so much spelling, and a horse paddock.
7015. By Mr. Nielson: Are any of the men you are thinking of married? The majority of them are single.
7016. We hear that a lot of the owners of large estates are anxious to subdivide—Do you know why the men do not endeavour to get some of that land? They told the Commission they would be willing to

subdivide for £1 an acre; but when you go to them privately, they want from £5 to £8 an acre. Big F. Bennett.
estates like The Palms are all full of nut-grass. The big plantations have plenty of implements, and can
keep it down; but if one man was to take up 10 acres of that land, and tried to get it clear, it would turn 20 April, 1906.

7017. So you think the terms are not good enough, and that in many cases the land is not in good order? That is so. They all say they want to sell, but the figure they want is prohibitive.

7018. *By the Chairman:* Do you think £5 to £8 an acre for land that is cleared and ready for cultivation a prohibitive price? Yes. If farms are sold here, £8 an acre is an enormous price for cane land, even if it is cleared and planted.

7019. *By Mr. Paget:* You are talking about £5 and £8 for cane fields only? I have seen several places sold here.

7020. *By Mr. Nielson:* But some had a crop or half a crop on? Yes; and it does not bring £5 an acre with crops on it. There is very little ground in the Mackay district rated over £3 an acre.

7021. By the Shire Council, you mean? Yes.

7022. Have you had any experience in the working of the Labour Bureau? When I came up here first I had some experience, and I could see that it was not worked properly. It is worked only for the benefit of Mr. Hornbrook. When men came to him for rations, he gave them Government rations, and sent them round to his private house to work.

7023. *By the Chairman:* Did he do that to you? No; but he wanted me to go out to Mr. Long, a friend of his, and clear his land for 12s. 6d. an acre, when the proper rate is £2 an acre.

7024. And you did not do it? I certainly did not.

7025. I suppose that was all that Mr. Long authorised him to offer? Both Mr. Long and Mr. Hornbrook had an interest in the place.

7026. *By Mr. Nielson:* Was that the only occasion on which you went to the Labour Bureau? Yes; I went for work and not for rations.

7027. Do you think that the Labour Bureau could be improved in such a way as to be of assistance to men and to the employers too? It is of no assistance to anyone at present. A kanaka bureau would be the proper name for it at present.

7028. *By Mr. Paget:* But would it be beneficial to have a Labour Bureau? Yes, it would.

7029. *By the Chairman:* Would men come and register for work? Yes.

7030. But they do not do it now? No, because it is not recognised as a Labour Bureau. I do not think there has ever been a white man who has got a job out of it.

7031. *By Mr. Paget:* Well, how can the system be improved, because neither the employer nor the employee make as great use of it as they might? Once the worker became possessed of the idea that it was purely and simply a Labour Bureau, and that it was there for his benefit and the benefit of the employer, then he would use it.

7032. *By the Chairman:* Do you think the worker would rather have the relief issued elsewhere than there? Yes.

7033. Do you think the fact that relief is issued from there prevents men looking for work there? Yes; it would be better to keep them apart.

7034. *By Mr. Nielson:* Did you ever ask at the bureau where work was plentiful? If you do not go cap-in-hand you get very little information.

7035. *By the Chairman:* You only went there once? Yes.

7036. You cannot rely too much on what other people tell you? No.

7037. *By Mr. Paget:* How many members are there in the Sugar Workers' Union? There are 180 members now, and it will be a strong body in time.

7038. Are they men who work in the cane fields? Yes; genuine sugar-workers, and there are honorary members besides.

7039. They have nothing to do with the mill-workers? Yes, some of them are mill-workers, but the majority are field hands.

THOMAS LEONARD, Cane Farmer, examined:

7040. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your farm? 137 acres.

7041. How much have you got under cane? 12 acres.

7042. How many tons did you cut last year? 133 tons.

7043. White or black labour? White labour.

7044. What wages did you pay? I paid a weekly wage of 25s. and found.

7045. What are you going to cut next season? I expect about 200 tons next season.

7046. You are registered, I suppose? Yes.

7047. Do you expect to be able to cut it at the same rate? I am on contract this time, and it will be at the union rates.

7048. *By Mr. Paget:* The Farmers' Association rates? The combined rates I mean. I mean the standard rates.

7049. *By the Chairman:* Have you anything to suggest to us about settling men on the land? I think it would be a good idea to settle men on the land in small areas.

7050. What would you say should be the minimum? Ten acres. Men do not care about taking on the responsibility of owning land. They would sooner work for wages.

7051. Do you know any Crown lands around Mackay that would be suitable? None that I could recommend for that.

7052. *By Mr. Paget:* In this immediate locality there are no reserves, except the old Sandringham Reserve? There is none here. To settle men on land like that, you would want men who are of some use.

7053. Did you ever employ Polynesians? No.

7054. Have you anything to say about the Polynesians? I think they should be allowed to remain. The "boys" would work themselves out in time.

7055. You have had no difficulty in getting what labour you want? No.

7056. Have you any knowledge of any other parts of the State where there might be a surplus of labour? No.

7057. Have you worked in other parts of the State? I did in New South Wales.

7058. How long ago? Twenty-five years ago.

7059. *By the Chairman:* The conditions have altered very much since that time? Oh, yes.

T. Leonard.

20 April, 1906.

(Mirani.)

SATURDAY, 21 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) |

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

JOHN HARRINGTON, Carter, and Representative of the Sugar Workers' Union, examined:

- J.
Harrington.
21 April, 1906.
7060. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A Carter.
7061. I understand that you are here as an accredited representative of the Sugar Workers' Union? Yes.
7062. What do you wish to say? I was appointed a delegate by the Sugar Workers' Union to meet the delegates from the Farmers' Association on the 9th of this month. I was very pleased to see the spirit in which the representatives of the Farmers' Association met us. They brought forward a scale of wages. I want to be careful about this, because it has been bungled up. They proposed to pay 3s. 4d. a day, instead of £1 a week.
7063. Was that during the crushing season? No; that was all the year round. We decided that the rate for all the year round should be not less than £1 a week. They put an amendment on that that the rate should be 3s. 4d. a day and found, and that was carried.
7064. The union wished that the wages should be paid by the week, whilst the association wanted them paid by the day? Yes.
7065. Was that settled? Yes. The Farmers' Association delegates carried 3s. 4d. a day against our £1 a week.
7066. Is that point still at issue between you? No; it is settled at 3s. 4d. a day.
7067. *By Mr. Paget:* Has the union agreed to accept the 3s. 4d. a day? The delegates have.
7068. But it has not been confirmed? No; but it has been referred back.
7069. *By Mr. Nielson:* Did you settle any price per day where a man was likely to be employed for less than a week? No. Eight of us—four from each body—debated that point for about half an hour.
7070. *By the Chairman:* But eventually they carried it against you? I stuck out that it was hardly fair, if it rained for a couple of days, that a man should have his pay stopped for the time it was raining.
7071. *By Mr. Nielson:* Supposing a farmer wanted a man for four days only, did you fix a rate? Yes; 3s. 4d. a day.
7072. You fixed that it should be 3s. 4d. a day where it was less than a week, but where it was for a week or more, payment was to be by the week? By the week all the year round.
7073. That was for a permanent hand? Yes.
7074. If a farmer wanted a man for a month, would it be by the day? We did not touch on that.
7075. If a farmer had 20 or 30 acres of cane, and, in addition to his permanent hands, he wanted to put on a man or two chipping for a few weeks, would they be engaged by the day? According to what we carried, I should think so.
7076. *By the Chairman:* What else have you to say? Where a crop was above the average we left it to be mutually decided by the farmer and the contractor. According to the *Courier* of 12th April, the farmers, in their return to Sir William Lyne, put their maximum in such a way that it was very misleading to the Minister.
7077. In what way is it misleading? It has got the maximum price for cutting at 6s. per ton for Mackay.
7078. *By Mr. Nielson:* What is wrong with that? Well, it cuts both ways. For instance, last year, at Mount Jukes, I was offered a 25-ton crop for 2s. per ton. I could not have taken it off if I had been offered 10s. a ton.
7079. How far is it from the railway? It is 3 or 4 miles; but if it was only a mile I could not have taken it off.
7080. Was it bad country? You could not bring a dray down some of it.
7081. *By Mr. Paget:* It is mountainous country? Yes.
7082. *By Mr. Nielson:* That is an exceptional case? In some instances you might be able to get the dray or truck into which you load right up alongside the train, and then again in other cases you might have to carry the cane 3 chains to the wagon. In that case the price of the contract makes all the difference.
7083. I presume that the Workers' Union and the Farmers' Association are not going to fix rates for exceptional cases? I do not know.
7084. *By the Chairman:* It is absurd to say that this 6s. per ton would be paid as the maximum price—You say it is a price offered for cutting cane where it would be impossible for anyone to make anything out of it? Yes; that is it. It is an impossibility for the Sugar Workers' Union and the Farmers' Association to fix a maximum price on a crop of cane.
7085. *By Mr. Paget:* The case you stated is a very exceptional one? Yes.
7086. *By the Chairman:* In your opinion that 6s. should never have been quoted? No; it is misleading to the Minister. You can do what we have done and nothing more.
7087. It is not possible to fix a maximum, then? No; it is impossible.
7088. Why is it impossible? It is an impossibility for a man to take a crop of cane at 6s. per ton if he cannot make 6s. per ton out of it. It would cost a contractor 6s. a ton to take the cane off in some instances.
7089. But why cannot you fix a maximum? Because it might be on the mountains, and you might have to carry it 3 chains instead of having the train alongside you.
7090. *By Mr. Paget:* With regard to this price of 6s. per ton having been quoted, are you not aware that for some very light ratoon crops on forest land, such a price has been paid? I have known 8s. per ton to be paid on McGregor's Creek.
7091. I do not mean hilly country. I mean a light ratoon crop? I have known 8s. per ton to be paid. Arthur Warde, of McGregor's Creek, paid 8s. per ton for cane which had to be cut and carted 7 miles.

7092. But this is for cutting and loading; we want to differentiate—Do you know of ratoon crops on flat country that have been so light that the maximum price of 6s. or 6s. 6d. per ton has been paid for cutting and loading? I believe it has.

7093. Such instances have occurred? Yes. Farmers, in order to get their land cleared off, pay more than it is worth. J.
Harrington.
21 April, 1906.

7094. Just specify the prices? As regards crops on scrub or flat forest land, from 18 tons upwards, it is 3s. 6d. per ton, cut and loaded on to portable trams.

7095. What about that price? That is the maximum price. Where there is a crop that is difficult to cut, we have left the matter open to be settled by the contractor and the farmer, and when the crop goes less than 12 tons to the acre, we leave it in the same way for the same reason. It might be a very light crop.

7096. That is a matter for mutual arrangement? Yes.

7097. *By the Chairman:* Then 3s. 6d. is the maximum? Yes. I believe there will be plenty labour in the district for this crushing.

7098. Why do you think so, seeing that there is a vastly greater area registered this year? Men came in from the West two years ago, and there must be 300 or 400 of them living about the district ever since. Some of them have taken up land, and the rest are camped waiting for the Silent Grove lands to be opened.

7099. Do you know any man who has taken up land? I know more than half-a-dozen married men with families who have done so.

7100. *By Mr. Paget:* Western workers? Yes.

7101. Where have they taken it up? Some have bought farms from the mills, but a good deal of the country that has been taken up has been Crown lands which have been selected. I gave a list to the Land Commissioner in Mackay of fourteen married men who want to select some of the Silent Grove land.

7102. What areas do they want? I think they want 160 acres, but I do not think those lands should be cropped with sugar-cane.

7103. For what reason? There are two reasons. One is that at present vegetables have to be brought to Mackay from other parts of the Commonwealth. Good crops of vegetables could be taken off those lands during the slack season, and the men could find work at the sugar-mills in the crushing season.

7104. You are speaking of such crops as maize and potatoes? Yes.

7105. *By Mr. Nielson:* Would the Silent Grove land be suitable for sugar-cane, or would it be too cold? I do not believe it is too cold there, because it is nearer the sea coast by 14 or 15 miles than we are. They are growing cane now at Matton at the end of the line, and just at the foot of the range.

7106. Is it first-class land? A great deal of it is.

7107. Do you mean that the selections should be 160 acres of first-class agricultural land? It would be almost impossible to do that. There should be at least 80 acres of good land in 160.

7108. I understand there are only about 3,000 acres of first-class land there; and, if you cut it up into 160-acre blocks, you could only settle twenty people? Some of the best land is scrub, and goes from here to McGregor's Creek. It has not been surveyed.

7109. The surveyors might have gone round it and given a rough estimate of the area? Yes.

7110. If a man has 40 acres of first-class land, and cultivates it well, he is just as well off as the man with 160 acres of inferior land? That is so. I think a farm is not taken up altogether for cultivation in this country.

7111. Could you not give men a bit of forest land and 40 acres of good land? Yes.

7112. Then you would get more people on to the good land? That is right.

7113. *By the Chairman:* Is there any land besides this scrub? 8,000 or 9,000 acres.

7114. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is that good grazing land? Some of it is splendid agricultural land running right down to the selections and right on to Jolimont Creek. There are two selections—part of the Jolimont run, I think. There must be 9,000 acres there, and they are falling into the hands of the Government if they have not already done so.

7115. *By the Chairman:* Is that near the Silent Grove land? Just adjoining it.

7116. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is it held under grazing right? I do not know.

7117. *By the Chairman:* Would it be a good way of getting people on the land? Yes. It is a disgrace that a population of farmers should be eating pumpkins grown in New South Wales.

7118. Do you think that the men who took those selections would sometimes be glad to get work somewhere else? The Government should insist that the people taking up the Silent Grove land should grow other crops than cane, as we asked in our petition.

7119. Do you think that, besides growing their own crops, they would be willing to work for other people sometimes? Certainly, for a few years.

7120. *By Mr. Nielson:* How long have you been in this district? Twenty-six or twenty-seven years.

7121. Have you ever worked in the sugar-cane? Yes.

7122. Do you think that the rates you have practically agreed upon are rates at which white men can make a decent living? I would like to see them raised about 5s. a week; but, knowing the difficulties of the men on the land, I think the rates agreed upon are all that they can afford to pay. We met on those grounds.

7123. *By Mr. Paget:* Mr. Bennett said yesterday, at Homebusb, where he appeared as an accredited representative of the Sugar Workers' Union, that the scale of wages had not been approved of, and he said that the union would approve of 4s. 6d. per ton for 8 tons or over on untrashed cane loaded on to a tram, and 3s. 6d. loaded on to wagons, and he gave us to understand that the scale you have been talking about would not be agreed to by the Sugar Workers' Union—he was emphatic about that? I know Mr. Bennett. In fact, I nominated him as a delegate; but, as vice-president of the union, I believe I can say that they will accept the scale; and had it not been for the quibbling of the local Press over the question of the maximum rates, I believe they would have been more than pleased with the work we did.

7124. As a delegate you consider that the prices put forward, and practically accepted by both sides, were standard rates, and neither maximum nor minimum rates? That is so.

7125. *By the Chairman:* When will your union meet to further consider the question? As soon as your Commission is over next week.

- J. Harrington. 7126. "Do you not think it would be better if you met before then, so that we should know what you had done before we leave the district? The secretary had a fortnight's leave, and he will not be back until next week.
- 21 April, 1906. 7127. *By Mr. Nielson*: The Commission being here has not interfered with it in any way? No. If there is a meeting after you leave, we can send you a report of it. I am very sorry that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company have issued circulars, stating that they are going to take off the crops of all their farmers with labour from the south.
7128. *By Mr. Paget*: Where is that? At Homebush.
7129. *By the Chairman*: Have you seen one of the circulars? No; but Mr. Mau told me I could mention his name, and I have been told by officers of the union that such a thing has occurred.
7130. *By Mr. Nielson*: In what way do you regret the issue of the circular? If the farmers had accepted the terms of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, it would have thrown the whole labour market in Mackay into confusion, and the local men would have been thrown out of employment for this crushing.
7131. Did the farmers not accept the scheme? I am pleased to say they did not, thereby saving the storekeepers hundreds of pounds.
7132. Where were the Colonial Sugar Refining Company going to get the gangs from? From the south. No place was mentioned, but I think they were going to get them from the Richmond and the Tweed. I have brought this matter under your notice, because you will get the same thing ahead of you. I would draw your attention to a paragraph in the *Worker*, and also to one in the *Trinity Times*, of Cairns, relating to the unemployed at the Mossman, and to the trouble between the mills and the Chinese at Hambleton, Cairns.
7133. *By the Chairman*: Have you any other suggestion? I believe that the Government should form a labour bureau.
7134. Do you think it would be a good thing? Yes; it would be a very good thing.
7135. Have you not got one in Mackay? Before the workers believe in it, they will have to alter the whole system of the officers in Queensland.
7136. What means do you suggest to alter it? Well, there is no understanding between the worker and the employer of labour, and whether rightly or wrongly the worker has come to the opinion that the officer is biased.
7137. Do you speak of any individual officer? I speak of every officer in the North of Queensland.
7138. The worker has come to the opinion that the officer in charge is biased against the worker in favour of the employer? Yes.
7139. They think he does not try to get good terms for the worker? Yes.
7140. *By Mr. Nielson*: Good terms as to wages? The feeling is that the officers wish to encourage kanaka labour.
7141. That is simply a surmise? I am not giving my own opinion. I have known Mr. Hornbrook since he has been here, and I have nothing against him, but it is the system that I am against.
7142. Are you aware why men do not go to the labour bureau? That is the reason.
7143. They think the officer in charge is too much interested in kanaka labour? They have no faith in him. I am not alluding to the head of the department in Brisbane. I am alluding to the officers in the North. I do not know much about the officers in the South. I believe if there were new officers appointed, and they were in touch with the farmers and the Workers' Union, they would do an immense amount of good. The whole of the information required could be gathered together and forwarded to the Federal Government, who would in turn send it around the colonies, and it would then save a lot of trouble.
7144. *By Mr. Paget*: It has been suggested, as one reason why the workers do not register at the bureau, that the officer in charge distributes relief, and good men do not care to go there in case it is thought that they are obtaining relief? There are some men who look on it in that light.
7145. It has been suggested that the two departments should be separated—Do you think that would be of some help? I do not think so. I believe that the whole of the officers connected with the kanaka department should be shifted from all those places to make them any good. I am speaking without any animosity in the matter at all.
7146. You think the officers of the Polynesian Department should not administer the labour bureau? That is it.
7147. You said there would be a sufficiency of labour in the district this year—What about next year, and the succeeding years, when a certain number of labourers have to leave who are now working in the sugar industry? I believe that if 4,000 kanakas leave Queensland, then 3,000 white men will be sufficient to fill the gap.
7148. Seventy-five per cent? Yes.
7149. *By Mr. Nielson*: We want to know, first, are the men here to do it? They could be brought here within a week.
7150. *By the Chairman*: Where from? All over the colony. We could get 3,000 white men from Queensland.
7151. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think that a properly organised labour bureau existing in every centre—not only in the sugar districts, but in every centre in Queensland—would enable the bringing together of all of these men? Yes, provided that the labour unions and farmers' unions, and all other bodies, are in touch with them. I should propose one little item on that matter. I suggest that the whole of the Crown lands in this district be opened for selection. There is land on the top of the Eugella Ranges—thousands of acres of the finest land in the world. Then on this side of the range we have the Seaforth Estate, right up to the land we have been talking about. Then we have got St. Helen's. I saw where the Minister for Agriculture has been inquiring for land for settlement under the Special Agricultural Selections Act. I saw where he was inquiring from the Lands Department in Cairns, and was surprised to find that they did not have an acre of land. I suggest that these lands be thrown open as a labour colony, to supply the whole of the labour for the North of Queensland.
7152. *By Mr. Paget*: Under what terms and conditions? Under the Agricultural Selections Act. Then I have no objection to throwing open some of the land under the ordinary rules.

7153. *By Mr. Nielson:* You think the foundation of a labour colony in a good centre would be of advantage? Yes; because you always have the labour at hand, and you would have no trouble in the world.
7154. *By Mr. Paget:* And to induce men to settle on the land you include Seaforth? I have got a particular use for Seaforth directly.
7155. *By Mr. Nielson:* Seaforth would be a good place to make salt? I have a better use for it than that. I suggest that Seaforth, with Port Newry included, should be thrown open as a village settlement—a fishermen's village settlement. The Government should supply fishing-tackle, nets, and boats.
7156. And bait? No; but fruit trees and seeds.
7157. *By Mr. Paget:* Will that provide sugar-workers? I hope you will excuse an old man for having an ambitious idea. Before I die, I wish to see the Queensland coast, right from Cape York to the Tweed River, guarded by coastguards of some kind. We have 7,000 miles of coastline in Australia, and we have no watchdogs of any sort.
7158. *By the Chairman:* You think that if a fishing population was settled there, the young fellows would take to the sea? Yes.
7159. *By Mr. Paget:* And those inland would work in the cane fields? Yes, and grow other crops in between.
7160. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything else you could help us with? I believe that the whole of the kanakas should be shifted, in accordance with the Act, at once, unless they are half-castes or exempted by the authorities.
7161. Do you realise that they might be shifted to a place where there would be nothing to eat? The islands may not have food enough for the occasion, but the Act was passed five years ago, and the Government must be prepared for it. Last year the Commonwealth Government gave £143,000 by way of bonus to the cane growers, and when there is a contract between the Government and the cane growers it should be carried out honestly, and any obstacles the farmers put in the way of deporting the kanakas will recoil on their own heads.
7162. But you do not want to injure the kanaka in any way or starve him? Nothing of the kind.
7163. Would it not be necessary to use a little caution as to numbers in sending them away? I would keep thoroughly to the Act, and make the Queensland Government get the Federal Parliament to select three or four islands and land the kanakas in those places.
7164. How would you feed them? Queensland or the Commonwealth would supply them with food.
7165. *By Mr. Paget:* Would you have them landed on three or four islands and then distributed to their homes from there? Queensland, for the sake of not falling out with the taxpayer who is paying the bonus, should land them on islands picked out by the Federal Minister or by the Commonwealth Parliament. I would force no man, woman, or child to go back to their islands. They could settle on those selected islands, and all the young males could be turned into a naval brigade to act as coastguards for the defence of their own country.
7166. *By the Chairman:* Do you know of any island that would be available for such a purpose? I would not like to suggest any.
7167. It would have to be an island that did not belong to anybody else? A federal island.
7168. Do you mean an island along the coast? No; in their own islands.
7169. *By Mr. Paget:* The Federal Government do not own their islands? We own a great many of them.
7170. They are under British protection, but not under the Commonwealth? The Commonwealth owns British New Guinea.
7171. *By the Chairman:* Do you not think the natives of New Guinea would have a good deal to say about landing a large number of other islanders there? I do not know much about the islands, but there must be a lot of islands there. I am considering the matter from the point of view of the farmers' benefit. If they act fairly and squarely with the Federal Parliament it will be to their advantage, otherwise they may lose the bonus.
7172. *By Mr. Paget:* You said that you would not deport Polynesian half-castes—There are very few of them in Queensland? Not many.
7173. There are a number of islanders who came to Queensland as single men, who have since married women belonging to other islands, and they have children born in Queensland and in attendance at our State schools—What would you do with them? I would put them on these islands I have spoken of and teach them there. I would supply them, as well as the village settlement I spoke of, with nets and seeds, and put the whole lot under the Naval Department of the Federal Government, who could make it a recruiting ground for the protection of the islands.
7174. *By the Chairman:* Would white sailors like to mess with black men? There would be no white sailors there. They would be just like the West Indian regiments of blacks, who are not as good men as the kanakas.
7175. *By Mr. Paget:* It has been suggested on several occasions that a system of references, such as exist in connection with the pastoral industry, might be initiated in connection with the sugar industry—What is your opinion about that? That system is a curse to the workers. It has done more mischief than anything I know of.
7176. You do not approve of it? I do not.
7177. Some of your representatives have approved of it? The unions in general do not approve of it. It causes men to give wrong names, and gives rise to a lot of trouble. Pastoralists have been accused—rightly or wrongly—of putting private marks on these references, which are known to the other pastoralists. I am glad to see that the system is dead out West.
- EMANUEL DARK, Cane Farmer, examined:
7178. *By the Chairman:* What area of land have you got? About 1,040 acres.
7179. How much have you under cane? 35 acres at present.
7180. How much did you cut last year? 25 acres.
7181. Do you know what tonnage you got? I do not keep a record of these things.
7182. Did you cut it by white or black labour? By white labour.
7183. By contract or day labour? Day labour.

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7184. What did you pay? 25s. a week, and found.
7185. Have you any difficulty in getting labour at that price? No; I got all the men I wanted. I could have got ten or fifteen men if I had wanted them.
7186. Were they good men? Yes, I never had any trouble with the men.
7187. Do you see the floating labour pass here? Yes; sometimes I meet ten in a day along the track.
7188. Is there such a proportion of wasters among them as they say? Last year there was the best class of labour I ever saw come into the district.
7189. *By Mr. Paget*: There was a distinct improvement? Yes; there was an improvement in the class of men wanting work.
7190. *By the Chairman*: From what part of the country did they come from—South or West? They came from the South.
7191. They were not Western workers? No; they were not shearers. Nearly every man I met wanted cane-cutting, and some of them said they preferred cane-cutting to anything else.
7192. Do you think there is likely to be a shortage of labour this year? No. I think there will be a surplus of labour.
7193. In spite of the fact that there is an additional area of cane registered? Yes, there will be a surplus in spite of that.
7194. Do you think the cry about the scarcity of labour is a wolf cry? Yes, it is a wolf cry. It is the policy of the old black bowlers to make things as black as possible. There is no occasion for all the howl about it.
7195. *By Mr. Paget*: Was there a large proportion of Western workers in this district last year? Yes.
7196. Were they good workers? Yes, they were a good class of men.
7197. The conditions in the West have been bad? Yes.
7198. The conditions there are improving now owing to the good seasons, and there will consequently be more work? I suppose there will; but there are plenty there to do the work.
7199. Do you think that the improved conditions in the West will be likely to keep men there who used to come to the coast in bad times? No; they prefer working in the cane-fields to working in the West.
7200. You think that the cane work will attract them? Yes; they told me that cane work is the healthiest work they ever tackled, and they consider that hoeing and chipping work is just a pleasure. A lot of men told me that.
7201. *By Mr. Nielson*: The cane work was easier? Yes.
7202. *By Mr. Paget*: What about cane-cutting and loading—Have they given an opinion about that work as against work in the West, such as shearing and tank-sinking? They do not work as hard at cane-cutting as they have to work in the West. I do not call sugar-cane cutting hard work.
7203. *By the Chairman*: What about the loading? I do not consider that hard work. I never heard anyone yet find fault, although they had the chance of doing it. There is an odd waster comes along, but the average men—that is, the good men—never find fault with cane-cutting and loading, and they consider it is not hard work.
7204. *By Mr. Nielson*: Were there not a lot of men here from the Clermont district? Yes; I knew them. I came from Clermont myself.
7205. What occupation were they following? Digging. Two brothers here took up land, and settled down. One was married, and one was single.
7206. Amongst the men with whom you had personal conversation, did they desire to settle on a bit of land? Yes. They say to the men on the land here, "You seem to be the only men who can afford to have a comfortable time."
7207. *By Mr. Paget*: They would really like to be in a position to have a home of their own? Yes. There are three men here now. One took off a crop last year, and another has settled this year. Two of them are brothers. All three of them are Clermont men. But the men have said to me that it appears that the growers do not wish to use the land, but they would sooner have the blackfellow or Chinaman here. They will not give it to white men, because they do not go hat in hand like Chinamen.
7208. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you any experience of farming land with black labour? Yes, and a bad experience it was. I started with black labour, and it was the worst start I ever made.
7209. How long did you have them? I had them three years ago.
7210. Their wages were less than you pay to white men? Their wages were £30 a year.
7211. How did they compare with white labour? If you have white men and pay them a good wage, then the white man will pay you as much as two, and sometimes three, kanakas, and what the white man does he will do properly. The nigger will never do it properly. I have seen the kanakas chipping and hoeing cane, and in two days it will require going over again.
7212. Kanakas require some superintendence? Yes, if you have two kanakas you have to superintend them. It would be better to do the work yourself than to let black labour do it. A good many like kanakas, but I do not. I never had any good out of them, and I never saw any good come from them. The men who hire the largest numbers of kanakas are the worst-off men. I know men who up till last year could not afford to hire anything but kanakas. They could not hire white men, and they were forced to have kanakas, and kanakas were sent to them. Scores of small growers do that.
7213. You mean that they get behind, and the kanaka is forced on to them? Yes.
7214. Who does that? The mills, or whoever they are indebted to.
7215. In some cases the landlord of the tenant farmer? Yes, even they will make them have kanakas.
7216. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you mean that the landlord has kanakas engaged himself, and gives them to the tenant farmer? Yes, he will.
7217. *By Mr. Nielson*: They do that everywhere by paying 3s. a day per head? They do it everywhere.
7218. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you any personal experience of the system? Yes; they forced kanakas on to me.
7219. That is, the people who were financing you? Yes; the Racecourse mill. I asked for money to pay for white labour, and they said "No." They said if I took kanakas they would guarantee them and see them paid. The Racecourse mill offered me the men eleven years ago. Since then I only went to the Racecourse mill one year, and got clear of it. I got clear of the kanakas, and since then I have got a share in the Marian.
7220. How long have you been growing cane? Eleven years.
7221. *By the Chairman*: You have no anxiety about labour in the future? No.
7222. You have never had occasion to go to the labour bureau, for instance? I have more reason to keep out of the way of the men.

7223. Does a road run near your property? Yes. It is the main road from here to Proserpine and Bowen.

E. Dark.

7224. Did you see if many of these men were very hard up? Yes, they were very hard up.

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7225. Have you ever had men asking for food? Thousands of them—I can safely say thousands.

7226. They would be heading for the North? Yes, for Proserpine. They say there are too many kanakas here.

7227. Is there much labour walking about now? I met three or four strong, healthy-looking fellows this morning. You can see them every day.

7228. Men walking about like that are men down on their luck? Yes.

7229. Do you think it would be a good thing if in the large centres there were some sort of resting house where these men could be supplied with food to enable those who are weak to recover themselves? Yes.

7230. Do you think they would use it? Yes.

7231. They would not loaf on it and abuse it? No.

7232. Do you think it would be an improvement to have a place where a man could rest for a bit? Yes. All he wants is a roof over his head during the wet season instead of having to camp under the trees.

7233. *By Mr. Nielson:* Would that not assist the operations of the labour bureau, as the officer in charge would always know where to find men looking for work? It would be a good thing. It would save the poor fellows from walking scores of miles.

7234. *By the Chairman:* It has been suggested to us that when a man comes off a long tramp he is not fit to do a day's work until he has had a rest? That is so.

7235. *By Mr. Paget:* Would it be advisable to do that if the labour bureau were well organised? Yes; it would be a good thing for both employer and worker.

7236. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything else you think would be of use to us? I see that in Bundaberg one farmer suggested that men should get certificates from their employers. I think it would be a good thing if the boss got a certificate from his late employee.

7237. You do not approve of the system? I do not.

7238. *By Mr. Nielson:* If a man wants a reference, there is nothing to prevent him getting it? He can get it in a few days. You want to get references for the boss and not for the man.

7239. *By the Chairman:* Do you know the country up at Fort Cooper? No.

7240. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you know the Eungella country? No.

7241. Do you know the Silent Grove lands? Yes.

7242. *By the Chairman:* Would it be a good thing to settle people on that land? That is what we want done.

7243. Perhaps there would be nothing for them to do? Let them grow a bit of cane.

7244. Could they do anything with maize and potatoes if they grew them? There is always a market for them. They are big items here.

7245. Men taking up those lands could work sometimes on their own holdings, and sometimes work for the canegrowers? Yes.

7246. What sized areas would you suggest? I believe in workers' areas of about 5 acres.

7247. Do you think that area is big enough? Quite big enough. A man could keep a couple of cows, and grow vegetables; and, if he wants anything larger than that, let him strike out. If he is a worker, he does not want much.

7248. You would not want him to be a worker all his life—you would like him to be in the same position as yourself? Yes. Well, let him strike out when he wants to be something larger.

7249. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you come much in contact with kanakas of late years—in the way of yarning to them? Not for a long time. I always consider the smell is too strong for me.

7250. Can you tell me why the "boys" have not been going home as their agreements have expired? They are decoyed into leasing land, and they have been made to believe that, if they are using a piece of land, they will not be sent home.

7251. How have you discovered this? I have discovered it from men who have had talks with kanakas.

7252. Can you suggest any means for deporting the kanakas expeditiously at the end of the year? The only thing I can suggest is that they should be mustered up, put on a boat, and sent off.

7253. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you given any thought to the food supply on the islands they are to be sent to? If a few are landed at each island, I have no doubt there will be plenty of food for them. "Boys" used to tell me they always had an abundant supply of food. You need not be afraid of landing twenty "boys" on an island.

7254. The evidence goes to show that on Malayta the islanders have not got an abundance of food, and that they live from hand to mouth—Can you suggest how 3,000 islanders can be landed there without inhumanity? I am not going to make any suggestion, although, if they are taken back, I think they will find tucker when they get there. If not, send down enough to keep them until they get food. Do anything to get rid of them. We don't want them here.

7255. *By the Chairman:* In the interests of humanity, we must make some provision for them? Take a supply of food down with them. Find out, first, whether there is a supply of food there.

7256. You think it would be better to feed them there than feed them here? Yes.

7257. *By Mr. Nielson:* As 5,000 or 6,000 islanders cannot be deported in a week, it was suggested in Mackay that those who did not get away soon should be allowed to re-engage for a short period? I would not allow any more to re-engage. I would close all the Pacific Island offices.

7258. The "boys" who do not get away immediately will be out of work, and they might become a danger to the settlers—How would you deal with them? I would allow farmers to engage them from week to week.

7259. *By Mr. Paget:* You would not allow re-engagement? Not for six months or three months.

7260. No time was stated; the suggestion was made to stop the islanders becoming a menace to the public peace and safety? Let them work in such a way that they can be taken away at a day's notice.

7261. *By Mr. Nielson:* Would you let them work at any kind of a job? No; only tropical agriculture.

7262. Then you would not get the bonus on your cane? There are plenty who have not registered for the bonus, so that it would not make much difference to them.

- E. Dark. 7263. *By the Chairman:* How would you view a suggestion to send the islanders into the Northern part of the State and allow them to engage for six or twelve months until they could be sent home? Ship them right off. I would not allow them to enter the North at all.
- 21 April, 1906. 7264. *By Mr. Paget:* Another suggestion was that some depôts should be formed—say, three in a district like this—and keep the islanders in the district until they can be sent home.—Probably you prefer your idea of allowing them to work from week to week? Yes; they would be earning their own living.
7265. What do you think should be done with married kanakas? They should all go home together. I do not look on a white woman who marries a kanaka as a white woman at all. A very respectable lady in this district said to me that they ought to be taken out to sea and dumped overboard.

EDWARD HOGAN, Cane Farmer, examined:

- E. Hogan. 7266. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer.
- 21 April, 1906. 7267. Where do you reside? Here at present. I have three farms.
7268. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you only cultivate on one place? On two places.
7269. *By the Chairman:* Are they here? One is at Mirani, and one is at Eton.
7270. What is the area of your farm at Mirani? 360 acres.
7271. How much of that is under cane? About 35 acres.
7272. *By Mr. Paget:* You are only getting it into cultivation? Yes.
7273. *By the Chairman:* Is the rest of it cane land? About 130 acres is good cane land.
7274. Did you cut any cane last year off that farm? Yes; about 300 tons.
7275. Did you cut it by white or black labour? White labour.
7276. By day work, or by contract? It was chiefly done by family labour.
7277. Did you employ anyone to help you? No; the employment I gave was chiefly in clearing the land.
7278. Did you clear by contract? Yes; it cost me 10s. 6d. an acre to clear last year.
7279. What is the area of your farm at Eton? 160 acres.
7280. Did you cut anything there last year? Yes; but I could not say how much. It was mixed up.
7281. *By Mr. Paget:* Was it cut by family labour? Yes.
7282. *By the Chairman:* Do you anticipate any shortage of labour this year? I think there will be a shortage.
7283. *By Mr. Paget:* I presume you are registered? Yes.
7284. *By the Chairman:* Why do you anticipate a shortage of labour? If people want work they will tackle anything; but this year they want weekly wages instead of contract work, and the tendency with weekly wages is to do less work for more money.
7285. You think there is a superfluity of labour now? I believe it will be short in the crushing season. Last year I could get men to take contract work; this year they want weekly work.
7286. What would be the best means of supplying the shortage you anticipate? We want more immigrants or black labour.
7287. Assuming that you cannot get black labour, would you favour immigration? Yes.
7288. To what country would you look for immigrants? If you wish to get my opinion, I think this is only a fad, and that black labour will be introduced again. We are giving white labour a fair trial, though.
7289. But you do not believe it will succeed? I do not think it will.
7290. *By Mr. Paget:* You are prepared to give white labour a fair trial, and pay the men fair wages, too? Yes.
7291. *By Mr. Nielson:* For what reason do you think it will not be successful? It will not leave any profit at the wages, taking good and bad seasons together.
7292. *By the Chairman:* Even with the bonus? The bonus has simply led men to charge that extra, unless you do your work with your own labour.
7293. *By Mr. Paget:* In order to pay the wages now proposed to be paid to white men, do you think it necessary that the present bounty system should be continued? Yes; to give it a fair trial.
7294. Is the bounty system a necessity to enable you to pay such wages to white growers? Yes; you could never pay them without the bounty. The industry would not stand it with dry seasons.
7295. What is the difference in the wages paid now and those which were paid before there was any protection? There is a big difference. The best time for labour in the Mackay district was when sugar was £30 a ton. Then the wages paid were 27s. 6d. a week.
7296. When was that? In 1881.
7297. *By the Chairman:* Sugar was then £30 per ton? Yes; and £35 per ton.
7298. Are the white workers being paid better wages under white labour conditions for sugar-growing than they were before the white labour bounty was given? Oh, yes; they are paid more at the present time.
7299. *By Mr. Nielson:* And the farmer is paid more for his cane now than when sugar was £30 per ton? Yes; but he has to hand it over in wages.
7300. *By Mr. Paget:* But it amounts to the same thing? Yes.
7301. *By Mr. Nielson:* If it amounts to the same thing it is all right? In some cases the wages are the biggest part of the transaction.
7302. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you appearing this afternoon as the representative of the Farmers' Association? Yes, as the chairman of the Mirani branch and vice-chairman of the combined association.
7303. You recognise that the Federal Act says that a certain number of islanders may be deported this year, and you know that that would lead to a very serious shortage in the labour supply? Yes.
7304. Is your association as an association taking any steps to replace those men after they have been sent away? They have taken no steps so far.
7305. Have they discussed the matter? Not generally. They have taken no steps whatever.
7306. Do you think there are sufficient men in the State in employment in other industries to fill up the gap that there will be in Queensland? Those near the townships will be all right, but there will be a difficulty for places at a distance to get suitable labour.
7307. Do you call the Mackay district at a distance? Yes, it is, from the bigger centres; and even in Mackay they will get more men than we will get out here.

7308. We had a witness this morning who lives in this district, and he says he can get as many men as he likes, and a great many more if he wishes? In some places you can get men. E. Hogan.
7309. In this immediate district? There are some men who fixed up their cane-cutting contracts in March, and they say that they have got all the men they want. 21A April, 1906.
7310. But this was a wages man? You can get plenty of men.
7311. This gentleman said all the men were men who were quite willing to do the work, and quite able to do it? Men will say things like that.
7312. *By the Chairman:* Are you near a main road? Not very far off. There seem to be more men about this year than there were last year.
7313. *By Mr. Paget:* What stamp of men are they—Are they better than the men who previously came into the district? Some of them. This is the slack season.
7314. Did you have a conversation with these men as to whether they would like to settle down in the sugar districts on the homestead areas? Many told me that they would settle down. So far as I saw, they said during the night that they would settle down to work; but next morning they were not ready. In some cases two or three days' rations were given to the men, and then they refused to work.
7315. Have you made use of the Labour Bureau in town at all? No.
7316. You know, of course, that there is a Labour Bureau? I do not know much about it.
7317. You never had occasion to make use of it? I advertise for men. I never use the Labour Bureau.
7318. You have not applied to the officer in charge of the bureau? No.
7319. If the Labour Bureau was made a more live institution for the benefit of employers and employees, do you not think some good might come out of it? Yes; it might be some good, but all the same the bureau sends out men and does not know whether they are good, bad, or indifferent. Something should be done to make the men who do not want to work do something.
7320. How would you do that—offer some suggestion? I do not know. In some parts they make them work. No man likes doing too much work, and I do not like to do too much myself.
7321. At the same time you are a real hard worker? Yes; and I can get away from it sometimes.
7322. To come back to the Labour Bureau: A large number of men are required in this industry—Suppose there is a demand for twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty men, do you not think it would be an excellent thing if the officer in charge of the bureau could put his hand on a number of men in the Clermont, Rockhampton, or Townsville districts, and be able to supply that demand at once? We used to get men from Rockhampton, and half of them were suitable, but the rest were no good.
7323. How did they get here—Did the men pay their passages? If they suited, the master paid their passages.
7324. And their return passages also? Yes. Part of them were good and part no good.
7325. What did they work at? Cane-cutting.
7326. But how did it work out? It worked all right. Mr. Archer, who got them, seemed to be satisfied.
7327. And did they return to Rockhampton after the season was over? Yes, and nearly all came back again.
7328. Mr. Archer paid their passages to Mackay? Yes; and back to Rockhampton again if they were good.
7329. If they worked a fair time? He paid both ways; but if not, he stopped their passage or part of it.
7330. Have you ever got any men under agreement, or in any other way, from the southern cities, and paid or guaranteed their passages? No; I have not.
7331. *By Mr. Nielson:* When you advertised for men did you get any applications at all? Yes; I got one or two, but they were for weekly work.
7332. Did they object to the prices you were offering? No; but they wanted to be paid by the week. They would not take it by contract at all.
7333. And you would not pay weekly wages? No.
7334. Then you were at a tie on the question? I do not know.
7335. If you think you had the right to refuse to pay them weekly wages, I suppose they had the right to refuse to work for you by contract? No one should refuse contract work.
7336. *By the Chairman:* Did they refuse because they thought you would not give enough? They wanted weekly wages.
7337. *By Mr. Nielson:* Perhaps they did not know what the job was worth? They had seen the job before. The difference between a weekly job and contract work is this: if they take a contract, they intend to make money out of it; but when they ask for a weekly wage, they intend to loaf. It is no use beating about the bush, and that is my opinion on the matter.
7338. You have been working in the canefields? Yes.
7339. Was that the game you were up to then? It was the game with some of them. When I am not inclined to work I am not there at all. I always do my share of the work.
7340. And are you the only man who does any work? No; there are plenty more.
7341. I am sure you do not think that every man out of a job is a bad man? No.
7342. You think there are some good men in the country who are not doing anything just now? Yes; I suppose there are.
7343. There are many of them about here just now? No.
7344. Do you expect a large number of men to be camped about here in the off season? No; I do not expect them to be camped at all.
7345. What do you expect them to be doing? What they can get.
7346. Do you expect the men to remain about here in the off season if there is no work to be got? There is work to be got.
7347. *By the Chairman:* Can you find contract work for them? Yes.
7348. *By Mr. Nielson:* Are they finding work now? Yes.
7349. You have got men working for you now? Yes.
7350. Do you want any more? Not just now, but I shall want them afterwards.

- E. Hogan. 7351. If the farmers cannot employ the men, they have to go somewhere else in the off season, have they not? This is the off season now.
- 21 April, 1906. 7352. And have the men not gone somewhere else because they could not get work here—Is it not because they could not get regular employment that they have left this district? No.
7353. What do the men do in the slack time of the year? Just camp in their tents. I have known men who only work in the crushing season.
7354. Can they earn enough in the crushing season to support them for the rest of the year? Yes.
7355. Do you think the men who were here last crushing season will come back again? Yes.
7356. You are not afraid of missing the men who came last year? No; the majority have come.
7357. Have any new ones come? No.
7358. Do you think there will be any new ones this year? There might be, but I would like to know where they are coming from.
7359. I would like to know if you can give me an idea what your Farmers' Association really does discuss when it meets? I do not think I am here to do that.
7360. I would like to know, because it seems that the most important thing that concerns you you never mention—you have never discussed the question of labour at all? We have never done so.
7361. You have not discussed it yet? We have discussed nothing yet except the wages.
7362. Do you not think you should have discussed the men first and the wages afterwards? Do you mean immigration?
7363. I mean getting men? Yes.
7364. *By Mr. Paget*: Is it not likely that the fixed rates will be likely to attract them? Do you mean to say that one district should rob another? I do not see much in that.
7365. But you have agreed to the scale? That is all right; and I think it is a very liberal scale.
7366. You have not discussed the question of getting men for the reason that the scale of wages proposed is such as to attract men? We do not know what to do. It is generally regarded as a Government affair to find labour.
7367. *By Mr. Nielson*: You are not waiting for the Government to do something for you? I do not know whether you expect the farmers to band together and start immigration themselves. You might say they did not get a desirable class.
7368. *By the Chairman*: Did you ever try the nominated system of immigration? Yes; but after I sent the passage-money home they did not come. They went to Canada, or somewhere else.
7369. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did you not offer them enough inducement? I could not tell stories. I painted things as they were, so that they should not be able to grumble afterwards.
7370. If you nominated a friend, do you think you could induce him to come here? He would go to Canada.
7371. Why? They have better land laws.
7372. They can get land here at 2s. 6d. an acre? They are going to Canada all the same.
7373. *By the Chairman*: Is that not because Canada is nearer to the old country? Men who have been here are in Canada now.
7374. *By Mr. Paget*: The fact that Canada is only 3,000 miles away is an attraction to immigrants from the old country? It is an attraction, but it is no attraction to the man who grows cane here.
7375. *By Mr. Nielson*: The majority of the canegrowers in this district are farmers, and not big planters? Yes.
7376. There are very few small growers who have any kanakas? That is so.
7377. Most of them have not had any for several years? That is correct.
7378. How do they manage to get on? With their own labour it is quite easy.
7379. How have those managed who have no labour but their own? They do not manage so well.
7380. None of them? At least their profits are not so large.
7381. Still they are making a success of it? Some are and some are not.
7382. We have met a good many who say they are? Oh, yes.
7383. Have you any reason for thinking that there will be a shortage of labour, beyond the fact that there are more people registered for bounty this year? I do not see so many men looking for work as in other years. I do not know what labour you have in Rockhampton, Brisbane, and other places, but men in Rockhampton are a long way off—they are no good here.
7384. People have come further than from Rockhampton looking for work—they have come from New South Wales? Yes.
7385. So far as you know, there may be plenty in other places? Yes; but they do not appear to be here in comparison with previous years.
7386. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you aware that at the end of 1904 there were over 200 employers of kanakas in the Mackay district? Yes; but there are not so many now. The kanakas have been paid off.
7387. How many less are there than there were at the end of 1904? There would be a good few less, but I have not the figures. They have paid off the kanakas to secure the bounty.
7388. That is during this year? Yes. Of course, the white labour system is only in its infancy. They have not had much experience of it.
7389. The difference cannot be so very astounding, because, on 31st December, 1904, there were 1,260 kanakas in the district, and we are told that at the present time there are over 900 in employment? It would not be such a big difference, but I know there are a few who have been paid off.
7390. You have to take into consideration, in speaking of this district, that after this year there will be a gap of 900 men to be filled up, so that it is worth your while to look out for sources of supply—Your association might consider the matter? Yes; but I have no suggestions to make.
7391. *By Mr. Nielson*: Can you give a rough idea of the number of people there are in the district who employ kanakas to-day? No.

(Eton.)

MONDAY, 23 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) |

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

RICHARD DEMPSEY DUNNE, Cane Farmer, examined:

R. D. Dunne.

23 April, 1906.

7392. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am a cane grower in the Eton district.
7393. What is the area of your farm? 500 acres.
7394. How much of that is under cane cultivation? I cut 80 acres last year.
7395. *By Mr. Paget*: What is your total cultivation? I have 220 acres that are fit for cultivation.
7396. *By the Chairman*: What tonnage did you get from your 80 acres last year? 1,000 tons.
7397. Did you cut it by white labour or black labour? Black labour.
7398. Have you any idea what it cost you? Homebush cut it for me with their kanakas. It cost me 2s. 6d. per ton to cut it, lay the trauiline, and load the cane on to the tram. But the ratoons were very poor last year and hardly worth cutting, and that made an inroad into the cost.
7399. You have had some years' experience in this work? Yes, I have had thirty-five years' experience altogether, three of which were spent in Fiji, when I was managing a plantation there.
7400. Are you registered for the bonus this year? Yes, I have registered two farms.
7401. What area have you registered? About 420 acres. I have one farm of 80 acres, which is not registered. I am using it as a grazing farm at present.
7402. Are you employing white labour at the present moment? Yes.
7403. What do you pay them? £1 a week and find.
7404. *By Mr. Paget*: For what class of work? I pay those wages to the ploughmen, and to the men planting cane and chipping.
7405. *By the Chairman*: Do you find any difficulty at the present time in procuring the labour that you want? Well, there is no difficulty in procuring a certain class of labour, but there is a great difficulty in procuring labour of the right kind.
7406. There is a great difficulty in getting the class of labour you want? Yes.
7407. *By Mr. Paget*: That is what you term the agricultural labourer? Yes, the agricultural labourer.
7408. *By the Chairman*: Are you anywhere near a road where travellers can readily get at your property? I am.
7409. Are you on the main road? No, I am off the main road.
7410. Are there many men looking for work? Not so many.
7411. A proportion of them are not agricultural labourers? If you engage some of them you soon find out that they are not agricultural labourers. I do not say that the men do not try to do the work fair enough, but they have not got the knack, and do not understand it.
7412. When men like that do not understand the work, do they ever show any willingness to take a smaller wage until they acquire the knack of doing the work? The less they understand about it and the duller they are the higher the wage they want, and if you talk about giving them a smaller wage they tell you to go to a warm corner and walk away, especially since the union has started.
7413. The union has only recently started? Yes, recently in Mackay.
7414. *By Mr. Paget*: I would just like to ask you whether you find the class of labour available this year and those you had during last crushing season of a better stamp than what visited the district before? You see, I have only gone in for white labour this year. I only registered in January last.
7415. Then you are not in a position to say? I only had ploughmen employed before. I had kanakas doing everything except the ploughing. I am now testing the white labour, and I cannot conscientiously say anything about it until I make a further test. I do not want to say anything against the white men, and I am not going to say anything either for or against until I have given it a trial.
7416. Under the altered conditions you are prepared to give the new system a fair trial? Certainly. I would not have registered if I was not. I am prepared to give and take.
7417. And without bias? Yes, certainly. When I make up my mind to do a thing I go in for it wholesale. It was of my own free will that I registered to give it a trial.
7418. *By the Chairman*: Are you hopeful as regards the supply of suitable labour in the coming season? I am not. It is all right this year, but in 1907, after the kanakas are deported, I cannot see where we are going to get sufficient labour to harvest our crops. We can get plenty to do the planting and the other part of the work, but with regard to the harvesting, speaking conscientiously I do not think that the labour will be available unless we get batches of immigrants from the old country.
7419. *By Mr. Paget*: You say you do not think there will be sufficient labour available to get the crops off after the end of this year, when the kanakas are to be deported under the Federal Act? Yes.
7420. What is your reason for saying that? The sheep are now increasing in the West, and all the Western men who have been coming down here to work will remain in the Western districts. We have had a lot of Western men to work, and they have done the work well; but they tell me that they would not harvest cane if they could get back their jobs in the West. They said that once things began to flourish out West, they would go back there, and it seems as if things are improving out there now.
7421. I might tell you that since we have been in Mackay we have had evidence which is the direct opposite to what you say? I know you have, and I read it. I can give you the names of the Western men who have told me that they would sooner go back to the Western country. One shearer who worked for me is an old townie of mine, and he told me.
7422. There are other men who say that they would sooner work in the canefields than do Western work? If you will allow me to say so, I think we can get plenty of men from the other States if we only make it worth their while. If we gave them 1s. an hour, and an eight-hour day, we would be able to get plenty of men; but the sugar industry will not stand that.

- R. D. Dunne. 7423. You are an old colonist, and you have had a big experience in different parts of Australia? Yes. I have been all over it.
- 23 April, 1906. 7424. Do you know of any agricultural industry in Australia that is protected, that pays its labour 1s. an hour for an eight-hour day? I do not.
7425. *By Mr. Nielson*: Or that pays it under any circumstances? No; only navvying.
7426. Any agricultural industry? I do not know any agricultural industry that can afford to pay that wage, not even the sugar industry.
7427. *By Mr. Paget*: You mentioned a short time ago that we would have plenty of agricultural labour if we could get batches of immigrants from the old country? Yes.
7428. Can you suggest how this can be done—What is the best way to overcome the labour difficulty? If you want the truth you will have it, but I have no suggestions to offer. In the first place, I believe that if both the Commonwealth and State Governments were to do all they possibly could and offered every inducement you would not get immigrants to come out here, because they have a horror of the Commonwealth at the present time.
7429. *By Mr. Nielson*: How do you know this? I read it in the papers.
7430. I would advise you not to rely too much on what you read in the papers? I know that they would sooner go to Canada and America than to Australia. I believe they will come here eventually. We might get them to come out here in small numbers at first, and then these men will write home to their friends and tell them how things are here.
7431. And what then? They might come in large numbers then.
7432. Do you think conditions are favourable now? No.
7433. What is wrong with them? I would not like to tell you. In the first place, the Commonwealth Government will not let anyone come. They have the door locked, and only open it when it suits them. Then there are some fellows here with money, but because they have a black skin they are trying to deport them. I will not say any more, as I do not want to be ordered out.
7434. *By Mr. Paget*: Can anything be done by farmers in the way of indenting friends, and getting them to come here and help them? I do not agree with that system at all. If they do not come of their own free will, nomination is no good.
7435. *By Mr. Nielson*: The nomination is only to enable them to get a cheaper passage? Well, Mr. Paget nominated them, and they left him in the lurch.
7436. *By the Chairman*: Mr. Paget was referring to people nominating their friends and acquaintances? But have you to pay out of your own pocket?
7437. You pay £1? I do not believe that system would work, unless it is a very near relation that a farmer could rely upon. I know a farmer not very far away, who brought out one of his relations, and as soon as he came out he left the man who brought him out in the lurch, and would not pay back what the farmer had paid.
7438. *By Mr. Nielson*: Where did he go to? To the next man.
7439. He stopped in the industry? But he would not work out his passage.
7440. *By the Chairman*: Would you approve of European immigration if it were obtainable? Certainly. There is nothing else to supply the industry when the kanakas go. When railway construction is in full blast and there is plenty of work out West, we have not got enough labour unless we bring people from the other States; and if we do that the people in the other States will very soon want to knock off the bonus so that they may not be deprived of men in the harvesting of their crops. We shall have to give an exorbitant price to bring labour here.
7441. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you think that the continuance of the bounty is necessary to enable you to pay wages that will induce men to come here? Unless the bonus is continued we cannot pay the present wage.
7442. After this year, do you expect to net 2s. 4d. a ton more for your cane under the new bounty? I do not expect to do anything of the kind.
7443. For what reason? The kanakas got 10s. a week, and taking the difference between the wages of white men and kanakas you will see that we cannot net anything at all. If we hold our own we shall be very lucky.
7444. The point is that at present you get 4s. 8d. a ton bounty, and next year you will get 7s. a ton—that is 50 per cent. over 4s. 8d.—but after this year the sugar mill will have to bear an extra excise of £1 per ton, and who will have to bear that excise? The canegrower.
7445. Then will you get the same price for your cane? I shall get less.
7446. Why? The mills will take off 2s. 6d. a ton. Eight tons of cane make one ton of sugar, and they have already informed us that they will take off that sum.
7447. Although you will be getting an increase of 50 per cent. in the bounty, you do not expect to be in a better position to pay higher wages to induce white men to come to you? The wages at present are as high as we can afford to pay, even with the bounty; that is £1 a week and found in good tucker. I am dead certain I cannot pay any more.
7448. Have you planted any cane this year? I have planted a larger area than before.
7449. Is it your intention, should the labour conditions prove favourable, to continue planting on your present scale? I shall certainly increase the area if the seasons are favourable. There is a lot of my land out of cultivation which I shall put under cane if things turn out as I hope they will.
7450. Is there anything you would like to say with respect to the supply of white labour? If the kanakas are deported before we are assured of a supply of European labour I believe the industry will go down. If we have our cane left on the field, as there are very few who have not to borrow money in a bad season, we cannot afford to lose our crops. Homebush is going to bind us to supply 40,000 tons a year, or else they will deduct so much from the price they pay us, so that I suppose we shall struggle on as long as the mill is at work.
7451. Then the Colonial Sugar Refining Company have informed the growers that they require an average supply of 40,000 tons of cane to enable them to keep their mill running profitably and pay you the price they have been paying? They have sent us circulars to that effect with reference to next year. Our agreements run up to the end of this season.
7452. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is each farmer asked to guarantee a minimum quantity? Not individually, but the suppliers are required to supply 40,000 tons of cane in the aggregate, and any man who does not like it can knock off and go where he likes.

7453. *By Mr. Paget:* Then we may take it that 40,000 tons of cane is the standard of a profitable crop for such a mill as Homebush? Yes. They tried to do it twelve months ago, but we were under agreement, and we would not consent. However, they have issued a circular telling us that after this season they will take off 1d. per ton for a less quantity than 40,000 tons. R. D. Dunne.
23 April, 1906.

7454. It is on some kind of scale? I suppose so.

7455. *By Mr. Nielsen:* Are they mostly tenant farmers? They were tenant farmers until the Commonwealth came into existence. The company did not care three straws; in fact, they would sooner the farmers owned the land, and gave whatever they liked to pay for it, but when the Commonwealth was established they turned round, and ever since they are making everyone pay so much a year for the land.

7456. They are all tenant farmers with a purchasing clause? I am not a tenant farmer. I bought land from the company, and, as far as I can make out, most of them have nearly cleared their land, and by the end of 1907 I do not believe there will be one man who will owe the company a red cent.

7457. Can you tell me how much they take off per ton of cane to go towards the purchase money? I do not know, but I think they deal very fairly.

7458. What proportion has been stopped towards the purchase? Whenever they give a bonus they take off half the bonus towards the purchase.

7459. *By Mr. Paget:* They pay large bonuses at the end of the year? There is no better company men ever worked for. I was thirteen years working for the company, and if you are an honest, hard-working man they will stick to you through thick and thin, and they will never let you go down, but if you are a loafer they will let you go down. I have nothing but good to say about the company.

7460. You are aware that the Federal Act says that there are to be 5,000 or 6,000 kanakas deported after this year? Yes.

7461. Can you offer the Commission any suggestion as to the most humane or the most business-like way of deporting them from Queensland? I have been thirty-five years dealing with islanders, and I have perhaps a humane feeling for them. A man has a humane feeling for an old horse that works for him. If it is to be done according to what I hear, and the islanders will be without food in the islands, I should say that they ought to be allowed to remain and work under temporary agreements until such time as facilities were offered to take them away. I do not intend to employ any islanders myself, as I will stand or fall on the bonus. I think, though, that they can be profitably employed up North on temporary agreements until such time as there are facilities for taking them back to their islands.

7462. And until the food supply in the islands is assured? I am a Christian man, and I would not like to see the poor devils who have worked for me for years go back and starve.

7463. You have no personal experience of the way they live in the islands? No; I saw them when I was at Fiji; but I only know about them in their islands from what I read in the papers. I have been using the kanakas for a long time now, and I have found them humble; and as I have a fellow-feeling for them, I would not like to see them starve.

7464. What do you mean by temporary agreements? An agreement that could terminate at any time.

7465. When their transport was assured? Yes, and there is sufficient food supply. I take it for granted that neither the State Government nor the Commonwealth Government will transport them unless they are assured that the food supply is there.

7466. That is one of the matters we have been appointed to inquire into? Well, that is my honest opinion.

7467. *By the Chairman:* With regard to immigration, have you any fancy for any particular country from which we could procure a supply of immigrants? I am an Irishman, and I would like my own countrymen to be brought out, but, unfortunately, they prefer to go to America.

7468. Because it is nearer home? Yes. They might come here when there is no more room for them in Yankeeland.

7469. Have you any experience of Finns? No.

7470. Or of Italians? No. I think the Germans would be good; but I found a Scotsman good, an Irishman better, and an Englishman as good as any of them.

JOHN TEMPLE, Cane Farmer, examined:

7471. *By the Chairman:* What are you? I am a practical farmer, like my father was before me: I ploughed and sowed, and tilled and mowed, and reaped my father's land. J. Temple.
23 April, 1906.

7472. What area have you got? 400 acres.

7473. How many acres have you under cane? I have about 65 acres altogether.

7474. How much did you cut last year? 30 acres of plant cane last year, good land and splendid fallow.

7475. What tonnage did you get? I got 86 tons, and I paid £113 to white labour for the cultivation of it.

7476. Cultivation and harvesting? Yes; harvesting, cutting, and everything until I delivered it to the mill, without including my own labour.

7477. What did you get per ton? I got 14s. per ton at one place, and 15s. per ton at another. I delivered it at two mills.

7478. *By Mr. Paget:* And you also got the bounty? Yes.

7479. *By the Chairman:* What would that make altogether that you received? I received 18s. 8d. from one mill and 19s. 8d. from another. I got 4s. 8d. bounty from each mill.

7480. White or black labour? White labour. The £113 went into that white labour.

7481. What do you expect to cut this year? I expect to cut 15 acres, and to get nearly 300 tons.

7482. *By Mr. Paget:* That is off 15 acres, but how much do you expect to get altogether? About 400 tons.

7483. *By the Chairman:* Do you expect to have any trouble about getting labour? I have had trouble about getting labour of the right kind.

7484. What labour are you employing now? I am employing no labour now, as I am sick of the labour that is forced upon a fellow here by the Government.

7485. Are they unreliable or unskilled? They are reliable enough, but they are unskilled. It does not pay a man to work, as you do not get the amount of labour you pay for. I have employed some

J. Temple. 23 April, 1906. skilled men, and they gave me general satisfaction—that is, white skilled labour, I mean. I paid them £1 a week and 15s. a week, and they gave me general satisfaction—that was, those who I knew were brought up to agriculture.

7486. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you ever employed Polynesians in canegrowing? I never employed Polynesians; but, mind you, I am not against the employment of Polynesians. I hope you understand that.

7487. Do you anticipate any difficulty in getting sufficient labour for the coming crushing season? I will have no difficulty, because I have three good sons.

7488. You are fortunate in that respect? Yes; I am not concerned at all about the labour supply for this year—not a bit concerned.

7489. *By the Chairman:* You speak of the labour being unreliable and unskilled—Can you suggest how better labour can be introduced into the district? Yes; but the Queensland Government hinder them from coming here.

7490. But where can you get them? From the British Isles, and from Germany and Scandinavia.

7491. You approve of nominated passengers? Yes; nominated, and no other. If the farmer is allowed to nominate the labour, he will get agricultural labourers, and no others.

7492. Have you ever nominated any immigrants yourself? Yes, I have. I brought some out, but they were not skilled agriculturists.

7493. Whose fault was that? It was not mine.

7494. But you nominated them? Yes. I nominated them to better themselves out here at something else. I paid their passages.

7495. You have not since nominated any agricultural labourers? No, I have not; but I know another man who nominated some immigrants and they were prohibited by the Government because they had an extra “kid” that was not nominated. The family had an extra youngster, and they were blocked because the youngster was not on the list of those who were nominated. The man who nominated these people afterwards got his money back.

7496. *By Mr. Paget:* Was the child born after the nomination fees were paid? Yes, somewhere about that time.

7497. These are unexpected events? Yes; surely they did not expect the family to come out here and leave the “kid” at home.

7498. *By the Chairman:* Then you would approve of immigration? Yes, of the right sort—agricultural labourers nominated by the farmers.

7499. You would not mind if they were unable to speak English? I would not care a rap what language they spoke.

7500. What do you think about sending away the kanakas? I have been thirty years in this district. I have seen Polynesians working upon the plantations. I have worked with them both in the field and in the mill, and I have found them honest and hard-working, and sober fellows. I have never known them to trespass upon the domain of the white man. I am very sorry that they are to go away from the industry, although I never gave them employment.

7501. *By Mr. Paget:* But the Commonwealth Act says they are to go? A few years back my cane was burnt, and my neighbours sent me Polynesians, and helped to get it off.

7502. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything else you would like to say? In reference to other coloured labour, it is not reliable.

7503. You want to see white men here? Certainly. I like to see men of my own colour here, but I do not want to see a lot of loafers. The Government have brought a lot of loafers from the British Isles, and they have been travelling about here. They do not go to the proper place to get labour.

THOMAS WOLFE, Manager of the North Eton Central Mill, examined:

T. Wolfe. 23 April, 1906. 7504. *By the Chairman:* What are you? Manager of the North Eton Central Mill.

7505. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you a representative of the Pioneer River Farmers' Association? I have been appointed as a delegate.

7506. *By the Chairman:* What is your opinion of the labour floating about the district? I have had experience at the mill for sixteen years, and in my opinion the quality of the labour offering is not improving—far from it. Last year and the year before I was stuck up by the want of men after pay day, and I have seen men close by the mill, and offered them work. On one occasion a man told me that he had not done any work during the crushing season, and he did not mean to do any.

7507. *By Mr. Paget:* They were loafers? Yes.

7508. *By the Chairman:* What percentage of the men you get would be “wasters”? I should say 25 per cent. of them are unreliable. As soon as they get their pay they take to drink.

7509. But many a good worker is not temperate? There are men walking about now who would do anything to get a shilling or two, and the first pay they get from the mill they go and get drunk.

7510. You would not call a man like that a “waster”? He is right while he is sober.

7511. What percentage would you say were not worth paying wages to? About 20 per cent.

7512. *By Mr. Paget:* Where do these men come from—Do they belong to the criminal class? I have heard that there were a lot of Western men among them, but I do not know whether they are different to other men.

7513. As a rule the Western man bears a good reputation as a labouring man? So I believe. Of course they come from all parts of the State.

7514. They drift into the district, and you do not know where they come from? I do not.

7515. I suppose a number of these undesirables come to prey upon the workers in the crushing season? Most of the loafers hang about to get a few shillings from the others, and that satisfies them. Several times I have been compelled to stop different classes of work in the mill owing to the want of labour.

7516. *By the Chairman:* What wages are you offering? From £1 to £2 a week and found.

7517. *By Mr. Paget:* Do the men make any complaints with respect to the accommodation or the food supplied to them? No.

7518. I am speaking of the times previous to the Shearers' and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act coming into force? We have a good name for both accommodation and food. We have put up extra accommodation within the last two years.

7519. The difficulty with the nomad class of labour seems to be that you cannot always put your hand upon good men? That is so. T. Wolfe.
7520. If some scheme could be devised for settling some of these men in homes of their own, do you not think it would be a good thing for the sugar industry? It would be a step in the right direction, if they were settled within 5 or 6 miles of the mills on suitable land. 23 April, 1906.
7521. The men would not necessarily want to return home every night? They would like to do that, but they might be 10 or 12 miles away and return to their homes at the end of the week.
7522. What area would you suggest they should have? Not a large area, otherwise too much of their time would be taken up with their own crops, and they would only want to go into the mill when it suited them.
7523. Then what area do you think would be a fair thing for a man to be settled down on, speaking generally, where he could get a decent bit of country? I should say 40 or 50 acres.
7524. Do you think this would be a solution of the labour difficulty? Yes; it would be a good thing for men to get a small farm.
7525. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think there would be any loafers after that? I cannot say.
7526. I suppose you know you get these sort of people all over the world? Yes.
7527. And you know that you get wasters amongst people in better positions? I am aware of that.
7528. *By Mr. Paget*: If you could get men to settle down and have a home of their own, is it not probable that they would be very much better workmen than if they were sitting under a gum-tree for one week and in a job the next? Certainly.
7529. They would have more interest in life then? Yes.
7530. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many men did you employ in the mill last year? I employed from eighty to ninety inside the mill last year.
7531. *By the Chairman*: You pay £1 a week and rations during the crushing season? Yes.
7532. Is that what you pay for mill work? Yes; not less than £1 a week.
7533. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you give a bonus if they stay? Yes. I think the bonus will be a good way of keeping them.
7534. *By the Chairman*: What bonus do you give? 2s. 6d. or 5s. a week.
7535. *By Mr. Nielson*: Can you tell us why there was a difficulty in keeping them when pay day came round? They simply went out the drunk.
7536. But the offer of a bonus would not keep them from getting drunk? If some of them worked six weeks or two months, and they knew that by getting on the drunk they would lose the bonus, they would see that they would not have long to wait for the bonus, and they would continue their work.
7537. Did it have that effect before? Yes; it did on those I tried. The crushing season was getting on then.
7538. *By the Chairman*: And it had a restraining influence on them? Yes.
7539. I suppose you would like to see less public-houses near the mill? Yes; there are plenty near enough.
7540. That is a thing you have in your own hands in the locality? Yes.
7541. Have you given any thought at all to the approaching deportation of the kanakas? In future, after the kanakas are deported, it will be a long time before we get sufficient men to keep these mills going.
7542. *By Mr. Paget*: For what reason? I do not see that the white labour is sufficient here.
7543. You do not think there is sufficient suitable labour? No. Suppose a man grew 2,000 tons last year, he will grow more this year, and will want more labour.
7544. Do you think the further subdivision of his estate might help him? I think so.
7545. *By the Chairman*: What I intended to lead your mind to was the means by which the kanakas should be deported—An impression prevails that if these men are launched on to the islands at once there will be a surplus population there; have you thought of that? No; I have not.
7546. *By Mr. Paget*: You have not had any experience of working with Polynesian labour. I have not.
7547. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you endeavoured in the off season to supply sufficient work to keep your staff at work all the year round? There is only a certain amount of work to do in the mill in the off season, and I only require a few hands in the mill.
7548. I do not mean you personally, but have your directors done anything? I have not heard them come to any decision as to what they might do.
7549. *By the Chairman*: Would these mill hands work at ordinary labour during the year? Yes.
7550. *By Mr. Nielson*: Where do you get your firewood? From the farmers.
7551. A good deal of it is cut by kanakas? I do not think so.
7552. As a matter of fact you are getting firewood cut by kanakas? One, that is all.
7553. He is supplying you with a fairly good quantity? Yes; a fair amount.
7554. Now, you do not expect that, when the crushing season is finished, the men should camp in the creek here, and wait for the next crushing season? Certainly not.
7555. Do you not think they should endeavour to keep the men going all the year round? There is a lot of labour wandering about that will not take work.
7556. I refer to the good men in the mill—the men who will all be taken back when the mill starts again? Yes.
7557. There is a great proportion of the men who were employed last year who you hope will come back again? Yes. It was the skilled labour I was talking about.
7558. You do not employ eighty skilled labourers in the mill? There are a few skilled labourers.
7559. You hope to get all those men back again? Not all of them.
7560. Do you not think your directors might try to do something to keep the men in the district in the off season? Yes; I daresay that could be done. When the crushing is finished I have got some clearing to do.
7561. Do you not think that if every shareholder laid himself out he could find a good deal of employment in the off season for the men who are wanted here during the crushing season? Yes; most of them have men working for them now whom they will use in the crushing season.
7562. *By Mr. Paget*: Do they have as many men working for them now as are necessary to carry on their farms? I could not say.

- T. Wolfe. 7563. Suppose a man can employ five men, is he employing five men or only one? They are employing as many as they require. I do not think there are enough farmers to employ in the off season all the men that I employ in the mill in the crushing season.
7564. *By the Chairman:* How many shareholders are there? Fourteen.
7565. And you employ ninety men? Eighty or ninety.
7566. Are any of the men you employed last year in the district now? A few of them, but not many.
7567. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you any idea how many cane suppliers the mill has? No, the secretary is not here.
7568. *By Mr. Nielson:* Did you ever avail yourself of the labour bureau at Mackay? We have sent to Brisbane for labour on one or two occasions.
7569. Did you get expeditious replies? Yes, on one occasion we got a few men.
7570. What class of men did they send? They were not bad.
7571. *By Mr. Paget:* Did you get them through a private registry office? Yes, a private office.
7572. *By Mr. Nielson:* Did you ever avail yourself of the Government Labour Bureau? No.
7573. *By the Chairman:* Why not?—Do you not know that you would get men for nothing through the Government Labour Bureau, but you have to pay a private bureau? Yes, I understand that.

FREDRICK REBETZKE, Cane Farmer, examined:

- F. Rebetzke. 7574. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your holding? About 200 acres.
7575. How much have you under cane? About forty acres.
- 23 April, 1906. 7576. How much did you cut last year? I cut 700 tons.
7577. White labour? Yes.
7578. Contract or day work? It was cut by contract.
7579. Untrashed cane? Yes.
7580. What did you pay? 3s. 6d. per ton.
7581. What was the weight of the crop per acre? 1.5 to 20 tons to the acre.
7582. How many acres had you last year? 30 acres.
7583. Are you registered? Yes.
7584. How do you view your prospects for labour for the coming year? We are all right for the present crushing because the kanakas are in the district, and that helps us a good deal.
7585. And after this year? I think there will be a difficulty to get the labour. If they deport all the kanakas at the one time, we shall not have sufficient labour left in the district.
7586. But you have twelve months to look forward to? But where are you to get them from?
7587. *By Mr. Nielson:* Where would you get them from if you did not deport all the kanakas at once? Immigration is stopped, and where can you get them from, except from the cities, and they are of no use to us.
7588. *By the Chairman:* Are you a member of the Farmers' Association? Yes.
7589. Are they taking any action to get labour? Not so far as I know.
7590. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you appear to-day as a representative of the association? Yes. I am one of the committee of the Eton branch. We were thinking that, if the deportation of kanakas was extended over three or four years, it would help us out of the difficulty.
7591. *By Mr. Nielson:* How is it you did not discover there was going to be a difficulty three or four years ago, when you first knew that the kanakas had to go? We did discover it, but we had no say in the matter.
7592. You never made any move to overcome the difficulty? There has been a continual muddle with the kanakas for the last twenty years—new legislation every session; and no matter what you did you could not help it. The Federal Parliament says that the kanakas must go, immigration is stopped, and there is no use interfering.
7593. Immigration has been stopped for more than three or four years? I know that; and I cannot see where we are to get labour from.
7594. Your association do not seem to look upon it as important enough to even discuss it? If the Government do not think it important enough, I do not see what the association can do; they have no say in the matter. The Government say there is to be no immigration, and the kanakas must go.
7595. You are aware that immigrants can come into the country? Yes; but under what conditions?
7596. Are you not aware that you can engage farm labourers if you want? Most of the farmers do not know anything about it. Besides, they are no use under agreement. In the event of the agreements expiring, would you have to send them back again, or could you re-engage them?
7597. It would depend on your agreements? What does the Act say?
7598. Do you not know that the Act says that, if you can show the Minister that there is not sufficient reliable labour available of the kind you want, you can get a permit to engage labourers from Europe? That is news to me. Of course, there will be a lot of trouble in proving to the Minister that there is not sufficient labour.
7599. Do you not think it is a fair thing that you should have to prove that to him? It is desirable to have more labour; but how is it possible to make the Minister see that there is no labour available?
7600. *By Mr. Paget:* Would not the fact that 5,000 or 6,000 Pacific Islanders are to be deported at the end of the year have some weight with the Minister? Yes. The farmers consider the Government are determined to sit on the sugar industry, and there is no use their meddling with it.
7601. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you mean to tell us that you have no intention of growing sugar after this year? I do not say that; but unless the conditions alter I do not see how we can except on a small scale. The deportation of kanakas will mean the employment of families. If a family grow 10 or 20 acres of cane, they have only to pay kanakas twice a year, and that has always been guaranteed by the mills. Under white labour conditions, when a man does not suit you, or he wants to leave, you have to pay him at once.
7602. You have only to pay him once? But when you have no money, how can you pay? The kanaka was paid twice a year, and the money was earned before it was paid to him.
7603. Does not every man earn his money before you pay him? If you had experience as a cane farmer you would not say so.

7604. It is because I have experience that I am asking you the question? If a man works for a week and then wants his £1 and you have not got it, what are you to do?
7605. I know sufficient about it to know that many farmers have to borrow the money to pay the kanakas, too? It was always guaranteed.
7606. But the guarantor did not pay them—the man who engaged them had often to borrow the money? The mill generally guaranteed the wages, but the school teacher will tell you that during the crushing season the children are kept at home to work because their fathers cannot afford to pay wages.
7607. You are quite satisfied that white men can do the work in connection with the industry? If you get the right class.
7608. At one time they used to tell us that white men could not do the work? The local men can do it all right, but city men will not try to do it.
7609. Are the women and children pretty good at it? They have to do the best they can to make a living.
7610. Can you explain how a number of white farmers have been able to grow cane during the last few years with white labour only? I have grown cane with white labour ever since the bounty was paid first. I have been very fortunate with labour, but a good many have not had the same experience. On the Monday morning after the first pay day in the crushing season, the men are not there.
7611. Is that the case with all of them? I should be very sorry to say that, but it is true in the majority of cases.
7612. I have often met employers who were not fit to work on Monday morning? That is quite true. There are good and bad in every class. But when the mills start crushing they do not like being kept idle. The farmers have to supply so much cane per day.
7613. You think that the drink question has a lot to do with it? Yes; with the people knocking about now. I would not say that of the olden times; but that is the biggest trouble now, particularly in the mills.
7614. If it was not for the drink, things would be much better? A good deal better.
7615. Are the hotels in your district too close to the mills? I do not think they could be any further away. They are within 2½ miles.
7616. Do you think they are necessary at all in the district? I could not say. I suppose they are. You could not do without hotels very well.
7617. *By the Chairman:* Are you a Good Templar? No, far from it. I am not a "boozzer" all the same, but I like a drink. In moderation it is a good thing.
7618. *By Mr. Paget:* Would it improve the condition of the workers if they had homes of their own, where they might work a bit of land during the off season, and during the crushing season place their labour at the disposal of the mills and the farmers? But how would they get these homes? The men knocking about have no money, and you would have to find the money for them.
7619. The Special Agricultural Selections Act, which was passed last session, provided for the settlement of men in groups, and for providing them with necessities until they can make a living for themselves—In the case of men in the sugar districts this assistance would not have to be guaranteed for long, because the men would be in a position to offer their labour to the cane-growers during the crushing season? The moment they got homes of their own they would not want to go out to work.
7620. *By the Chairman:* Do you not know that the whole of the agricultural districts of Australia were not settled by men with cheques in their pockets? Certainly; but they were honest married men, and they went out to work.
7621. Are there not honest married men now? Yes; and they do it every day.
7622. *By Mr. Paget:* Would it not be a good thing if we could get the honest single men to settle down on holdings of their own, and by and by they might marry and have families? I do not think it would work, because most of the single men will not go in for land. Besides, if you make the areas too big, they will become cane-growers themselves, and want to work on their own farms.
7623. *By Mr. Nielson:* That would be a good thing for the country? Yes; but that is not the kind of labour we want.
7624. *By the Chairman:* But would not another man come and take the place of such a man when he became an employer? Certainly, if there was immigration; but I do not think we have the people in the Commonwealth to do it.
7625. You think we should have immigration? Most decidedly.
7626. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you engage labour on behalf of the mill? No; the manager does those things.
7627. Have you a farm of your own? Yes.
7628. Do you ever engage labour through the Government bureau? No.
7629. Do you know anything about its working? No; but it might be a good thing if you could get men from the south for the sugar industry.
7630. *By the Chairman:* Can you give us the name of any family in this district where the wife and children work on the farm? Christopher George is one.
7631. *By Mr. Nielson:* How old are the children? They are young girls. I have seen them harrowing.
7632. *By the Chairman:* Are they past school age? One of them is, but some of them are younger.

ELI BELDAN, Cane Farmer, examined:

7633. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your farm? 1,600 acres.
7634. What area have you under cultivation? 148 acres under cane.
7635. *By Mr. Paget:* You are a farmer and a grazier? Yes.
7636. *By the Chairman:* How much did you cut last year? 1,600 tons.
7637. From how many acres? 130 acres.
7638. White labour? Black and white, mixed. I got no rebate.
7639. Have you registered for this season? Yes; I have registered it all now.
7640. Have you made arrangements for taking off your crop this year? Yes; I let it to contractors.
7641. *By Mr. Paget:* What do you expect to get? Pretty well 2,000 tons.
7642. *By the Chairman:* On what terms did you let it? At 3s. 6d. per ton.
7643. To cut and load? Yes.
7644. *By Mr. Paget:* Will the cane be trashed or untrashed? Untrashed.

E. Beldan.
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- E. Beldan. 7645. *By the Chairman* : Is it hilly country? No; level country.
 7646. *By Mr. Paget* : Do you load on to trams or wagons? Wagons.
 23 April, 1906. 7647. With respect to this contract you have let, has it been let to a number of men or to one man? To one man.
 7648. Does he propose to hire the men on weekly wages, or share and share alike? Weekly wages.
 7649. What is the name of the contractor? Charles Lucas.
 7650. *By the Chairman* : Are you employing any field labourers? Yes.
 7651. What wages are you paying? £1 a week and find them, for some of them, and for other men I give 30s. a week and they find themselves.
 7652. Are you near a main road? Yes.
 7653. Then you have an opportunity of seeing the class of labourers that are travelling about? Yes.
 7654. Have you some experience of this locality? Yes; since 1892.
 7655. How does the labour compare with the class of labour of a few years back, that is as to their style and adaptability for work and character, and so on? They are just about the same. I see no difference.
 7656. Everywhere in life, from kings down to the poorest men, there are good and bad men; what percentage of indifferent men do you think there are? I should say 25 per cent.
 7657. That is one man in every four; is it as bad as that? I would take it to be about 20 or 25 per cent.
 7658. Do you include in that men who would be good workers, but they are intemperate? Yes.
 7659. Try and exclude that class of men, because one hopes to cure that sort of man.—How many wasters are there, as I do not call a man a waster because he sometimes gets drunk? I included those men because the farmers can get nothing out of them except for about a week.
 7660. *By Mr. Paget* : They are not stickers? No; they will get a few shillings, and then off they will go.
 7661. What do you estimate your cane cost you to cut and load last year with kanaka labour? Under 2s.
 7662. You were not registered? No; I was not registered. I had several contract men on at 3s. per ton. There were good crops of cane on it, but they left. Some of them were fairly good men, but some of the men cut only half a ton a day.
 7663. I suppose they were not acquainted with the class of work? No; they were Western men, and were not acquainted with the cane-cutting at all.
 7664. *By the Chairman* : Have you ever cut cane yourself? Yes.
 7665. What could you cut in a day on a 15-ton to 20-ton crop? Three tons. I used to do it.
 7666. *By Mr. Nielson* : Not cut and load? Yes.
 7667. *By Mr. Paget* : You are a large grower here? Yes; about the largest.
 7668. Of course, you are aware that a large number of labourers are employed in the industry this year, who will not be employed next year? Yes.
 7669. How do you view the future? I do not know what is going to become of it. I think that labour will be scarce.
 7670. What planting are you doing this year? I am planting only 40 acres this year.
 7671. What is your usual planting to get an average of 2,000 tons from the crop? I have planted 74 acres the last two years, but I will plant only half of it this time.
 7672. For what reason? Because I anticipate that the labour will be short; and, as it is my first year under the bounty, I want to see how I get on.
 7673. *By Mr. Nielson* : You do not plant 74 acres on the average to keep going? Yes.
 7674. But you had a drought on you before? Yes. I only take off two crops, and then plough it out.
 7675. *By Mr. Paget* : If you crush 140 acres, you must plant 70 acres every year to keep it up? I planted 74 acres the last two years, and this year I have to crop 148 acres—74 acres of plant cane and 74 acres of ratoons.
 7676. In order to keep up your crop for next year, you have to plant 74 acres this year? Just so; and I am planting 40 acres.
 7677. That makes a total of 200 odd acres under cultivation? There is more than that.
 7678. Are you prepared to give the new system a fair trial? Yes.
 7679. You have always hitherto employed kanaka labour? Kanakas and whites. Several years I have had white men cane-cutting to help out, as I had not enough kanaka labour.
 7680. *By the Chairman* : What did you pay last year for white labour? 3s. a ton. The year before last I paid 2s. 6d. I had good crops, and I used to put them in the best of cane.
 7681. Did they make satisfactory wages? With a crop of about 25 tons they stuck at it the whole season; but last year, with a 30-ton crop, the men left it.
 7682. *By Mr. Nielson* : Was it the same men? It was the same contractor, but he had different men during the season.
 7683. *By Mr. Paget* : What wages are you paying for ordinary cultivation work? £1 a week and found all the year round to ploughmen and general hands.
 7684. Do you knock them off in wet weather? No.
 7685. You do not charge them for rations on wet days either? No. I keep them all the year round.
 7686. You find other work for them to do? Yes.
 7687. Are you appearing as a representative of the Farmers' Association? Yes.
 7688. It has already been stated by another representative of the association that you have not taken into consideration the future supply of labour? Not as yet.
 7689. Can you give any suggestions as to how the gap can be filled up? I think it can be filled by immigration.
 7690. From what countries? I suppose from Scotland, England, Ireland, or Germany. There are good agricultural labourers in all those countries; but immigrants from big cities are no use to us.
 7691. Do you think sufficient inducements can be offered to that class, presuming the supply of labour in the Commonwealth is insufficient? I think they would be very pleased to come, because the rate of wages is so small at home.
 7692. *By Mr. Nielson* : Have you any idea what wages are paid there? I have been here twenty-two years, and the wages are no better than when I left. I came from Yorkshire, and when I left I was a big lump of a fellow, and the most I got was £13 a year and found, while farm labourers were getting from 15s. to 18s. a week and find themselves.

7693. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you not think conditions are somewhat better now? I do not think they are. E. Beldan.
 7694. *By the Chairman*: Do you correspond with friends at home still? Yes.
 7695. Have you ever made use of the provisions for nominating immigrants? Not yet.
 7696. You know some people have done it with success? Yes.
 7697. *By Mr. Nielson*: I suppose you think the Government ought to supply you with labour and pay their passages? No.
 7698. How do you propose to get immigrants, then? If it was a system of assisted passages it would be all right.
 7699. *By Mr. Paget*: Would you be prepared to make use of that system? Yes.
 7700. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do not the members of your association know that they can do that? I am not certain. An association was in existence a few years ago, but it collapsed, and it is only being worked up again now.
 7701. How many members have you got in the Eton branch? I think there are twenty odd. We started again about a month ago.
 7702. *By the Chairman*: Cannot the farmers nominate people from the old country? It might be done.
 7703. *By Mr. Paget*: If you had ten agricultural labourers coming out and it cost £15 for each, and the State had to pay £5, the employer £5, and the labourer £5 out of his wages when he came, do you think such a system as that might help you? I do not know.
 7704. I am presuming this in the event of the State Government entering into an agreement for landing a number of men here? I do not know how it would act. It might act in some cases but not in others.
 7706. A good agricultural labourer who wants to come out to this country to make a start might be justly asked to pay a portion of his passage money if he were going to a good job, and seeing that you have to pay the current rate of wages under the Commonwealth Act? We have no objection to paying good wages so long as we get good men.
 7707. Do you think that some such scheme as that might meet the difficulty? I really cannot say. It might meet in some cases, but not others.
 7708. *By Mr. Nielson*: In what way? Because some of the farmers who wanted men might not have the money to pay.
 7709. *By Mr. Paget*: But perhaps they might be able to find the money? Yes, they might.
 7710. Do you think such a suggestion is worthy of consideration? Yes, it is.
 7711. I suggest that the employer should bear part of the passage money as an insurance premium for labour for his crops merely in the event of there not being sufficient labour available in the State? Yes.
 7712. Do you think it is worthy of your consideration? I think the other proposal would be far better.
 7713. *By Mr. Nielson*: But in the other proposal you have got to pay £4? I know.
 7714. *By Mr. Paget*: You are a large grower and you might think it worth your while to consider such a scheme as this to get out agricultural labourers? Yes; but at the same time I might think I was getting out men whom I could depend on, and yet there is a lot of risk attached to it.
 7715. Very great care would have to be exercised in the selection of the men; but, of course, objections can be brought forward against every scheme? That is so.
 7716. Have you given any thought to the subject that has cropped up of workers' homes? Not as yet.
 7717. You are intimately acquainted with the Crown lands in this portion of the district? Yes.
 7718. Can you suggest a suitable area on which men could settle down and make homes for themselves, and use their hands for the purpose of making money during the crushing season? I should say that a man could make a home for himself and his family on 30 acres. An area of 20 acres would make him a nice place to live on.
 7719. Do you think he could raise some garden truck and a few pigs and poultry on that? Yes.
 7720. In what locality do you think the land is suitable, and what distance from the work centres? At the present time there is not much Crown land available in the districts near the mills.
 7721. We are aware of that, and we want you to tell us where there is some, and what distance away it is? I cannot tell you that as far as Crown lands are concerned.
 7722. Well, it has been suggested to us that the downs country, say at Fort Cooper and Oxford Downs, might be suitable for settling people on the land with the object of wheat-growing by and by? I think that country ought to be good for wheat-growing purposes.
 7723. What about the climate? It has a good climate.
 7724. What about getting the produce to market? It would cost too much to bring it down.
 7725. But the country is there? Yes, and it would be all right if they could get railway communication.
 7726. Do you think that would solve the difficulty? I think so.
 7727. Do you not know of any land that might be made available nearer than that—Are there any lands nearer here than the range? There is no agricultural country, as it is practically all taken up.
 7728. I suppose a very vast area of this country is only grazing country? Yes.
 7729. And not suitable for agriculture at all? No.
 7731. The great object you must have in view is the retention of white labour in the various districts for the purpose of assisting in the harvesting? Yes.
 7732. Even on the poorer country, do you think these men could grow some off crop such as sisal hemp? I do not think so. I have seen several people try to grow it out here, but they could not make a success of it.
 7733. It is a slow-growing crop, and not like corn and sugar-cane; but this country would be good for it? I do not think so. I have seen several farmers try to grow it, but it did not make much headway.
 7734. Can you give us any suggestion as to the deportation of the kanakas at the end of this year? I think it would be wise if the Government would let them enter into an agreement to work until such time as they can deport them, or until it is convenient to deport them.
 7735. How long do you think? Say, three or four years. Apparently, so far as I can learn, food is a bit scarce on the islands, and if they are deported all at once they would starve.
 7736. *By Mr. Nielson*: Where did you learn this? I read it in the newspapers.
 7737. But the difficulty that would arise if the islanders were allowed to re-engage for any considerable period would be that you would not be able to claim the bounty? Yes.

E. Beldan. 7738. *By the Chairman:* I do not see what work you could put the islanders to if you did allow them to be re-engaged, because, practically, you are all registered for the bounty, and you would lose it? There are some farmers not registered yet, and, if they can keep the "boys," I doubt if some of them will register at all.

23 April, 1906. 7739. *By Mr. Nielson:* Your argument is no good, because the same cry would come along in four years' time, and there would be no finality to it? —

HARRY WEBSTER, Cane Farmer, examined:

H. Webster. 7740. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your holding? 60 acres.

7741. How much have you under cane? 60 acres.

23 April, 1906. 7742. Is it leasehold or freehold? I pay a royalty.

7743. *By Mr. Paget:* What is the royalty? 1s. per ton.

7744. How much did you cut last year? I cut 10 acres.

7745. For how many tons? About 100 tons. It was a very poor crop.

7746. Were they old ratoons? Yes.

7747. Have you planted any more? I have planted 60 acres, including the 60 acres I have just mentioned.

7748. Are you appearing as a representative of the Farmers' Association? Yes.

7749. *By the Chairman:* Are you registered? Yes.

7750. Are you employing any labour at present? No.

7751. Have you made arrangements for getting off your cane this year? Yes; I have contracted with Messrs. Morehead and Jefferson at 3s. 6d. a ton.

7752. Are they going to take it off share and share alike, or are they going to employ labour? I think the two of them will be able to do it. They share and share alike.

7753. *By Mr. Paget:* Have they been doing this class of work before? Yes; on the Tweed.

7754. *By the Chairman:* Are they living here now, or are they coming up to do it? They are cutting wood for us at The Leap.

7755. Do you feel uneasy about the supply of labour for 1907? Yes; I think it will be scarce.

7756. Have you lived long in this district? I am almost a native.

7757. What have you to say of the men who are walking about looking for work? The year before last I was in partnership with my father. We had five men, and after every pay-day they lost a week through drink. We would try and persuade them to return to their work, but it was no use. They would want a drop more drink, and back they would go to the "pubs."

7758. Have you heard any talk about adding to the number of public-houses in the district? No.

7759. I suppose you know the residents can prevent the number being added to if they like? Yes.

7760. When these men were at work, were they good men? There were some really good men among them, and others were just the opposite.

7761. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you not think it is advisable to make your wants known in districts like the Tweed, Richmond, and Clarence Rivers, where there is a large number of cane-cutters? That is so. You can get men to do it who come from agricultural districts. I have had chaps from Melbourne and Brisbane, and they were about the lowest class you could strike. The men from the Clarence, Richmond, and Tweed have been fair men.

7762. Last year, two men came to Mackay from the Richmond River who represent thirty or forty men in one small locality—If you let your wants be known to such men, could you not get a highly desirable class of men? But is labour available down there?

7763. They said that they represented thirty or forty men from one small locality, and there might be 400 or 500 available in the Northern Rivers district? That would be something towards supplying us with labour.

7764. With regard to the deportation of Pacific Islanders, do you generally coincide with the views expressed by your fellow representatives from the Farmers' Association? Yes.

ROBERT STUBBIN, State School Teacher at Eton, examined:

R. Stubbin. 7765. *By the Chairman:* Have you any of the children of Christopher George at your school? Yes.

7766. How long have you been at the Eton school? Nine years last January.

23 April, 1906. 7767. How many children of George's have you at the school? Two at present.

7768. Are they boys or girls, and what age? One is a boy, aged twelve years and nine months, and the other is a girl, aged nine years and nine months.

7769. How have those children attended school in the last twelve months? These attend better than the elder children. At one time I had five children from that family, and on an average they were away during the crushing season for three months in the year.

7770. *By Mr. Paget:* The others have left school now? Yes.

7771. *By the Chairman:* What attendance is a child obliged to put in? Sixty days in the half year.

7772. That is the minimum? Yes.

7773. Had you any cause to proceed against the father for the undue length of absence of his children? He lived beyond the limit.

7774. Do the children now at school attend pretty regularly? They attend more regularly than the elder children used to do.

7775. Have you known any instance where children have been kept unduly away from school for the purpose of working on the farms? Yes; there are cases.

7776. When I said unduly I have an idea that so long as the work is not hard for the child it is only reasonable that the children should do it? They are kept away to work on the farms, but what they do I cannot say.

7777. The settlers sometimes keep their children away from school to work on the farms? That is general throughout Queensland. When I was down South the children used to stop away from school by the dozen in the corn-shelling season. Here, they are away planting, and probably driving horses, for all I know. When planting is on, they gather up the tops for cattle feed.

7778. *By Mr. Paget:* Are young girls kept away from school for the purpose of cutting and loading cane? I do not think the girls do that round about Eton. It is generally the boys who are kept away from school for that.

R. Stubbins
23 April, 1906.

7779. *By the Chairman:* From your point of view is it an improper thing that they should do a reasonable amount of work within their strength on their fathers' farms? I have seen a boy work on a farm and do a man's work in many ways.

7780. But not unduly? I think the parents can do just as well by hiring labour as by employing their children.

7781. But suppose there is no money to pay men? That may be the way they look at it. In many cases when they keep their children at home to do work, it is not urgent work. It could be left for another time.

7782. But from the point of view of humanity, do you think the children suffer? I do not see why any children should be supposed to work before they are fourteen years of age. My children go to school, and although I could find little jobs for them to do, I never kept them away from school to do a job, and if I can send my children to school the other parents can send theirs. They tell me that I am not a farmer, but I tell them that I know just as much about a farm as they, as I did work on a farm at one time, and I know a farm can be carried on without the assistance of children.

7783. *By Mr. Paget:* Have the children been kept more often from school since the bonus has been in force than they were before? I can mention one family who kept their children at home immediately the bonus came into force, but with regard to others I do not think so.

7784. Do you know anything about the North Eton school? I have heard the teacher complain of the absence of the children from the school there.

7785. This working on the farm is given as the reason? Yes.

7786. What is the attendance at your school? Last year it was just a point short of 100.

7787. What was the average attendance? In the past year the average attendance was eighty-two or eighty-three. I do not think there will be more this year, as there is an exodus from the district. There are very few children to take the place of those who have grown up and gone to work.

7788. You might have them next year? No; Hatton is the attraction.

7789. *By the Chairman:* The families are moving? Yes.

(Plane Creek)

TUESDAY, 24 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) |

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

HENRY EDWARD TURNER, Cane Farmer, and Chairman of the Plane Creek Central Mill Company examined:

7790. *By the Chairman:* Are you a cane farmer? Yes. I am also chairman of the Plane Creek Central Mill Company.

H. E. Turner.

7791. What is the area of your farm? 550 acres. I farm 200 acres myself, and the rest is let to tenants.

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7792. How much have you under cane? 70 acres.

7793. How much did you cut last year? I cut 1,200 tons from 52 acres.

7794. Did you cut it by white or black labour? By black labour.

7795. Did you make any calculation as to what it cost per ton to cut and load? My contract price was 2s. 9d. per ton cut and loaded on to trucks at the portable tramway.

7796. *By Mr. Paget:* What class of coloured labour did you contract with? Ticket "boys." They had the contract, and they employed Malays and their own countrymen.

7797. *By the Chairman:* Are you registered? Yes, this year.

7798. Have you made any arrangement for taking off this year's crop? Not as yet. I am about to do so.

7799. How much do you expect to cut? About 1,600 tons from 70 acres.

7800. What field labour have you been employing during the last few months? White labour.

7801. What wages are you paying for white labourers? 5s. a day in the slack season, and they find themselves.

7802. Have you any difficulty in getting men at that price? Not so far. Of course, I have only got two.

7803. Do you anticipate any difficulty when the crushing season comes on? I anticipate some trouble in getting the right class of men. I have no doubt I shall get a sufficient number.

7804. Have you taken any steps to make your wants known in the centres of population where labour is obtainable? No.

7805. Are they local men whom you are now employing? No, they are floating labour.

7806. Where do they come from, and what were they previously employed at? One of them had been a slaughterman in a meatworks, and the other was a traveller at all classes of work from one end of Queensland to the other. I had three men, but one has gone.

7807. Do you not think it would be a good thing to make your wants known in the South? I think it is time it was done.

7808. Are you a member of the Farmers' Association? Yes.

7809. They have not taken any steps so far? Not that I am aware of.

7810. Have you had much experience in working kanakas? I have been ten years in Queensland, and have been growing sugar all the time. The first two years, when I was growing on a small scale, I employed white labour, and I have employed coloured labour ever since.

H. E.
Turner.

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7811. Have you given any thought to the way in which Pacific Islanders can be deported with humanity after the end of this year? It is a very difficult matter. I have had conversations with a good many "boys" on the subject during the last year or two. Some of them are anxious to go, others are indifferent, and others are afraid. Their excuse is that they may lose their heads. I suppose they mean they have fights there, and came to Queensland to get out of it.
7812. *By Mr. Paget*: They have probably been in trouble over some of their tribal customs? Yes.
7813. *By the Chairman*: Do you think they are anxious that the time for repatriation should be extended as much as possible? I think so.
7814. *By Mr. Paget*: The islanders who are anxious to return are those who are here under their first agreement? Yes.
7815. Have you any coloured farmers growing cane for your mill? I suppose there are eight or nine.
7816. What nationality are they? Hindoos, Chinese, and kanakas—principally Hindoos.
7817. *By the Chairman*: How many kanakas? Only one kanaka that I know of.
7818. *By Mr. Paget*: Have they been growing cane for long? For several years. There does not seem to be any prospect of that class of labour increasing here.
7819. Are you not doing anything towards providing yourself with white labour to enable you to carry on your operations after this year? We are not moving in the matter so far as this year is concerned. I feel fairly safe for this year. Several men have been inquiring for work, so that, if they come along about the end of May, as they promised, I shall have no difficulty, provided they prove reliable.
7820. There is not a large number of kanakas in this district? No. I think there are only four or five farmers now working under black labour conditions.
7821. Why do you anticipate a shortage of labour by and by? In the first place, there are about 6,000 kanakas to be deported, and that will necessitate at least 6,000 white men to take their place.
7822. *By the Chairman*: Will it take man for man? I would not compare a white man with a black man, but it is the reliability of the black man that makes him count.
7823. *By Mr. Paget*: You want a surplusage of the nonad class of labour to keep up the supply? Yes. I anticipate rather grave trouble after this year, and I dare say in some localities there will be trouble this year. Speaking for the district generally, I think there will be a shortage, because of the withdrawal of so much coloured labour.
7824. Do you think there is sufficient floating labour in Queensland to fill the gap? I think there is, but better means of transport must be devised to get that labour here. For instance, free passes might be granted on the railways as far as Rockhampton, and then arrangements should be made with the shipping companies to give the men cheap passages to Mackay.
7825. Are you acquainted with the conditions in the Western districts of Queensland? No. I have never been there.
7826. *By the Chairman*: How far is it from Rockhampton to Mackay by road? About 160 miles.
7827. If men were landed in Rockhampton by train, do you think it would be too much to expect them to walk that distance? No; but I think we might make arrangements with the shipping companies to pay their passages from Rockhampton to Mackay.
7828. The employers could make arrangements? Yes. If men were kept in the dépôt at Rockhampton the arrangements for bringing them here could be made at this end.
7829. Would the employers be willing to advance the money for their passages from Rockhampton to Mackay? I think so.
7830. If you did that you would have to make the officer in charge of the Labour Bureau in Rockhampton your agent to engage the men there? Yes.
7831. *By Mr. Paget*: Would you expect the employee to refund the passage money afterwards, or would you be prepared to recommend that the employer should pay the fare? I should think the employee would have to refund it.
7832. Then you would expect men to come under agreement? Yes, as far as the refund is concerned. I admit that it would be a difficult matter, as a man might work a day or two and then clear out.
7833. *By the Chairman*: If the officer in charge of the Labour Bureau in Rockhampton was constituted your agent, he might enter into an agreement with a man that the passage money should be regarded as an advance to him, and then you could proceed against the man under the Masters and Servants Act—only you would have to engage him for a specific period? My idea is that the engagements should be for the crushing season—say, six months.
7834. Would it be unreasonable to expect a man who has been given a free railway pass to Rockhampton to walk the rest of the way to the sugar districts? It is rather a long tramp.
7835. *By Mr. Paget*: And without food? Yes; and there are a number of creeks without bridges. It has occurred that people are lost while coming along the road. They are lost sight of altogether, and are either drowned or something else in crossing the creeks.
7836. *By the Chairman*: You think that is impracticable, then? They do it all the same.
7837. I now they do it? Yes; but it is too much to expect a man to do.
7838. *By Mr. Paget*: How does your manager supply the labour for the crushing season? He engages them as they come along.
7839. These travellers? Yes.
7840. *By Mr. Nielson*: Has he any occasion to look outside of these travellers? No; they travel along at crushing time. There are crowds of them.
7841. *By the Chairman*: Is this on the main road to Broadsound and Rockhampton? Yes.
7842. *By Mr. Paget*: And this is the first mill? Yes.
7843. *By Mr. Nielson*: I understand you, then, to be of the opinion that there is sufficient floating population in the State to keep the sugar industry going, if a proper labour bureau system is established, probably in all the leading centres? Yes.
7844. And if a concession were given to the men to enable them to travel? Yes; on the railways.
7845. And on the steamers, too? Yes; we will get concessions from the shipping companies.
7846. Does the mill arrange with its suppliers to deliver a stated quantity of cane per day? Yes. The whole crop is, say, 40,000 tons. It is allotted at 400 tons a day. That amount is then allotted, *pro rata*, amongst the farmers, and each man delivers the quantity allotted to him.
7847. Then you allot so much, *pro rata*, according to what the crops estimate? Yes; they start and finish on a certain day. It is cut out that way. Each farmer goes right through the crushing. It often happens that two or three bunch together, and one cuts out and then helps the other until he cuts out.

7848. *By Mr. Paget*: If you estimate the crushing to last 120 days, and the amount 600 tons, then 5 tons a day would be a farmer's share? Yes.

7849. That enables the farmers to make their labour arrangements with something like a feeling of certainty? Yes.

H. E.
Turner.

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WILLIAM GERMAN, Cane Farmer, examined:

7850. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your cultivation? 600 acres.

7851. How much is under cane? I have got 40 acres under cane.

7852. *By Mr. Paget*: What is your total cultivation? I am letting it run out as fast as I can.

7853. You cultivated more than that before? Previous to the alteration, I used to cultivate 70 acres.

7854. Do you know what tonnage of cane you got last year? I got between 500 and 600 tons.

7855. White labour or black labour? White labour.

7856. By contract or otherwise? Principally by wages last year, but I had it cut both by contract and wages.

7857. What did you pay for contract work? 3s. 6d. and 4s., loaded on the trams. The contractors raised it 6d. at the commencement of the season, and I had to lay the line, although, when they took it for 3s. 6d. per ton in the first place, they agreed to lay the line themselves.

7858. What did you pay for the day labour? 27s. 6d. a week and found.

7859. *By the Chairman*: Was the white labour floating labour or local labour? It was partly local labour and partly floating labour.

7860. Were the floating labourers good men? Very few of them.

7861. Do you anticipate any difficulty in getting labour in the future? If I were to carry on the area I previously cultivated, I would have; but I do not intend to cultivate the same area. I am reducing the area because I think there will be a scarcity of labour.

7862. Are there not enough men coming here to supply you? Not enough suitable men.

7863. In what way are they unsuitable? In the first place, they do not understand the work, and in the second place, after they have worked for a week or a fortnight and they get their money, they go away to the "pub.," and you do not see them again. When you do see them again they are not much good for anything.

7864. You are a ratepayer? Yes.

7865. You have two new licensed houses here? I am outside the boundary of the Phue Creek Division.

7866. *By Mr. Paget*: But you are a ratepayer in No. 2 Division? Yes.

7867. *By Mr. Nielson*: It was not only last year that you discovered that men got drunk and did not turn up? No.

7868. The other farmers know that pretty well? Certainly.

7869. Why did they allow the public-houses to be built here when they could have stopped it? I suppose the prohibition party was not strong enough when we took a vote. Prohibition was passed in No. 2 subdivision.

7870. After the public-houses were built? Yes.

7871. The residents can say whether they want more hotels put up or whether they want any? There was little said about the two public-houses. I was surprised when it came up. They were not opposed by the police. I suppose they thought we might as well have a dozen as two—they might starve one another out the quicker.

7872. Did you grow cane by white labour last year? I always used about half white and half coloured labour.

7873. Was the labour worse last year than previously? It was just about the same.

7874. How many white men do you employ? When the gang was cutting there were twelve. I have four continuously.

7875. *By Mr. Paget*: What men have you now? I have one outside my own family.

7876. You are one of the fortunate men with large families? I have two sons.

7877. What wages are you paying? £1 a week and found. He is doing hackabout work. He does not plough, but he does anything else about the place.

7878. Why do you fear being unable to get sufficient labour after the kanaka has to go? The difficulty is getting reliable labour. We cannot give such high wages to the class of labour offering and make the industry pay.

7879. Could you afford to pay the present rates if you had agricultural labourers who understood their work? We might be able to pay good men £1 a week all the year round. That is what is needed by the farmer as well as by the labourer.

7880. *By the Chairman*: Would you give nothing extra in the harvest time? You might, but I do not think there is a labourer in the district at the present time who earns more than that.

7881. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do they get plenty of work during the off season? You cannot get it, and therefore I am giving up. If a man gets 30s. or £2 a week, it is exhausted in keeping himself until he gets another job at the same rate, and it is really better for both the farmer and the labourer that the wage should be £1 a week and found all the year round. That is the wage which I consider the industry can afford to pay good men at present.

7882. *By Mr. Paget*: Where would you propose getting these good men from? When I commenced sugar-growing sixteen or seventeen years ago, there was immigration from the old country. Although there was then coloured labour in the district, I commenced with white labour, and found it very satisfactory.

7883. That was the time when shiploads of immigrants used to come direct to Mackay? Yes.

7884. *By the Chairman*: Do you advocate immigration? Yes, on the same system as formerly, from the United Kingdom.

7885. Not from the continent of Europe? I am not going to say not from anywhere.

7886. *By Mr. Paget*: You are a Britisher? Of course I am.

7887. *By the Chairman*: Have you ever employed kanakas? Yes.

7888. Have you thought out any scheme which would facilitate their deportation with as little hardship as possible? It would facilitate the wishes of the Government if the "boys" were left alone and allowed to work themselves out. It would mean barring out other aliens, whom, as a community, I think we would rather keep out.

W. German.

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W. German. 7889. I was not asking whether you approved of the principle of deportation, but of whether you have any scheme to suggest? If they were let alone they would go of themselves. They are constantly going now.

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7890. *By Mr. Nielson*: They are not going now in the numbers they would be going in ordinarily? There are not so many here.

7891. But do you not know there are great numbers of unemployed kanakas in Queensland? Yes. They are unemployed because we are not allowed to employ them.

7892. And yet they are not going home? The Government have the money to take them home.

7893. I am sorry to tell you they have not. We have paid it—Where is it? I suppose some of them are quite satisfied to stop here.

7894. That is not the question—The question is that they have to be sent home, and we want to find out which is the best way of doing it? I do not think there is anyone who can assist them going back so well as the Immigration Agent. The Immigration Agent would be better than anyone else.

7895. Do you mean the Polynesian Inspector? Yes.

7896. Do you think the Polynesian Inspector at Mackay should make it his business to explain it to the "boys"? He is more capable of doing it than anyone else.

7897. You think, if he did, the majority would act upon his advice? I think if they did not go upon his advice they would not go upon anyone else's advice.

7898. *By Mr. Paget*: Is it not possible that a number of "boys" are waiting for agreements in the crushing season? I cannot say what it is, as I have not employed coloured labour for three years, and have really not come into contact with them since.

7899. There are some "boys" unemployed who will neither go home nor stay? I quite understand the difficulty you are in, and to my mind the easiest way out of the difficulty would be to let them go back gradually without any trouble to the Government or anyone else.

7900. I suppose you have not had much experience with regard to the shipping of these islanders? No; I have not had much experience of shipping them.

7901. You said some short time back that you thought immigrants might be introduced under the old system, and that the State should pay the whole of the passage money; but it does not seem that such a system is likely to come into force again according to things as they look, so how would such an idea as this strike you?—We presume that the passage money would cost £15—Say the State Government was prepared to enter into an agreement to pay £5 of that money, the employer to pay another £5, and the labourer £5; do you think it would be possible to get out good agricultural labourers under that scheme?—Do you think it would be a feasible scheme? I think so if the agreements were made long enough, and they could not break the agreements next day.

7902. It would be understood that they would be under agreement? We have seen all that before.

7903. But people make mistakes and learn by them? I understand that the Government is not prepared to stand by agreements.

7904. *By Mr. Nielson*: The Government has nothing to do with agreements? It has.

7905. Do you mean the State or the Federal Government? Both. Is there not a tendency that there should be no agreements?

7906. Not that I am aware of—Are you thinking of the Immigration Restriction Act? Yes.

7907. Are you not aware that an amending Act was passed by the Federal Parliament last session, by which labourers or workmen can be introduced here—The Minister has to be satisfied that there is not sufficient of those men in this country? I did not take much notice of it because I did not think that it was of any value to us.

7908. If you could show the Minister that 6,000 men are leaving this industry, surely that would be sufficient argument to use to allow you to get labour from the United Kingdom or Europe? Yes.

7909. Is it worth thinking of? It would depend on what they did when they got here. Is the Government prepared to enforce it as a farm labourer?

7910. What do you mean by enforce? If I make an agreement with a farm labourer, will the Government object to it?

7911. The Government has nothing to do with that? The Government has to make the laws.

7912. The same law applies to them as applies to a kanaka who absconds from his hired service? I have heard many cases myself. I have heard it from others where the farmer has not been supported at all.

7913. That is the fault of the man who sits on the bench? We are supposed to think that the police magistrate knows his business.

7914. Do you know that kanakas even run away from their places? I have heard so, but I have not had any trouble with any.

7915. And you read in the papers they are fined for doing it? Yes.

7916. They were fined because they entered into an agreement and broke it? The only assistance that could be given to the farmer would be to bring the labouring classes under an agreement to stand for twelve months, because a man would then stay twelve months.

7917. If I make an agreement to stop three years, and I do not stop, then I will get run in—that is the law to-day? We have not seen that carried out in Mackay.

7918. *By the Chairman*: Is there a police station here? Yes.

7919. You ask the sergeant in charge to show you the Masters and Servants Act? I have got it myself.

7920. The law has been in existence for forty years in Queensland, and it was a New South Wales Act before that? I just gave that as a suggestion.

JOHN CHRISTOPHERSON NICHOLSON, Cane Farmer, examined:

J. C. Nicholson.

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7921. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you representing the Pine Creek branch of the Farmers' Association? I am the chairman; but I am not representing the association to-day. There was no one appointed, but as I thought you would have no one to meet you, I came down myself.

7922. *By the Chairman*: What is the size of your farm? I have a selection of 800 acres.

7923. How much have you under cane cultivation? 60 acres. I have tenants as well.

7924. What acreage under cane have you let to tenants? It is hard to say. I suppose they have 48 acres under cane.

J. C.
Nicholson.

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7925. Black or white tenants? One Malay and four white men.
7926. How much did you cut last year? I cut 555 tons.
7927. By white or black labour? Black labour.
7928. By contract? No, wages.
7929. What wages did you pay? 12s. a week and found.
7930. By Mr. Paget: Were they Polynesians? Yes.
7931. By the Chairman: Are you registered now? Not yet.
7932. By Mr. Paget: What did it cost you per ton? From 1s. 6d. to 1s. 10d. or 2s. per ton, according to the wages.
7933. By the Chairman: To cut and load? Yes; and I have a white man driver.
7934. Do you expect to have any difficulty about getting labour in the coming year? I have my doubts. Mine are now under agreement.
7935. When does your agreement expire? At the end of this year.
7936. Do you think you will be able to get white labour next year? I think it will be very difficult next year, and it will be difficult this year. In the past few years there has been sufficient to cut all the cane there has been, but no surplus.
7937. Is the white labour satisfactory? I cut one year with white labour, and it was very satisfactory, but I retained 25 per cent. of their money. I gave them 4s. a ton, and if I had not kept back 25 per cent. at the first pay I would have lost them, because they all went and got drunk. As it was, one of them left and forfeited his 25 per cent. The rest of the gang put on another man, and they had him running between my cane paddock and the hotel for grog all the week. They paid him 25s. a week for nothing else than to carry beer. That was the way they broke off the grog.
7938. If that is the state of things, do you not think it is a great pity that you should have four hotels here? I do.
7939. By Mr. Nielson: It rests with the people here? We had a local option poll in No. 2 Subdivision a bit ago, and it was decided not to have any more. It is the curse of the white man.
7940. By the Chairman: The only objection you have against white labour is the intemperance of the white labourer? It is unreliable owing to intemperance; but I also think there are not sufficient white men available. I think there will be a scramble this year for labour, and next year it will be worse.
7941. By Mr. Nielson: Have you any reason for thinking so? There has never been a sufficient supply up to the present.
7942. But was there any inducement for a lot of men to come here before? I do not think there was, because there were plenty "boys."
7943. By the Chairman: If a kanaka could get grog, would he not be just as unreliable as the white man? Every bit. The only thing that makes him reliable is the agreement.
7944. And the fact that he cannot get liquor? Yes; because he is not allowed to. I believe there are 6,000 kanakas going away. Well, it will take more than 6,000 white men to take their place.
7945. Is the kanaka better than the white man? No; but he is reliable, because he is under agreement, whilst the white man will not sign an agreement. He wants to come and go just as he pleases.
7946. By Mr. Paget: You think you must have more white labour than you actually require? It is absolutely necessary.
7947. By Mr. Nielson: When you retained 25 per cent. of your men's wages, were they not under agreement? Yes; but they will not all agree to that. You will not get a man to do any work but cane-cutting under agreement. He will not undertake general work under agreement.
7948. We are talking about cane-cutting? I thought we were talking about all cane work.
7949. Do you not think you could get men to take on a six months' agreement as general farm hands? I am sure you will not get the present class to do it. You will get no man at Plane Creek to sign an agreement for general work.
7950. By Mr. Paget: Do you know any instance in this district where farmers have offered hoeing by contract to men? In scrub land there has been some contract hoeing, but I have no personal experience of it.
7951. The men prefer not to be under contract or agreement with respect to that work? Yes.
7952. By Mr. Nielson: You will get some employers who will not make an agreement because the men want agreements for twelve months? It is a very risky business taking on a man you do not know. If you know your man, it is a different thing.
7953. By Mr. Paget: What do you propose to do after this year as you have not registered? I am going to register at the end of this year.
7954. Is it your intention to continue cultivating on the scale you are doing at present? I will try it.
7955. Although you have always employed kanakas, you are prepared to give the new system a fair trial, and without bias? Yes. I will give white men the same wages as everyone else, and I will feed them well.
7956. In order that you may be able to pay the present scale of wages, is it necessary that there should be a continuance of the bounty? Certainly. As soon as the bounty goes, the sugar industry is done for under white labour. It will dwindle away, and die in a few years. The cane cannot pay the wages without the bounty.
7957. The industry must be protected if the present wages are to be paid? Certainly.
7958. Have you given any thought to the deportation of the kanakas? I have thought of it a lot.
7959. Can you suggest a means by which it can be carried out without inhumanity to the islanders? I think there will be a lot of inhumanity if they are taken away in a lump. I do not think the farmer can say anything about it, except that, if such a large number of men are dumped down on islands where there is not sufficient food for them, they must suffer hardship, unless surplus supplies of food are provided.
7960. Then what is to be done with them here, seeing you are not allowed to employ them? They must starve, unless the Government or someone else feeds them. The town is full of "boys" now, and they will work for anything from 6s. a week, and that shows they are pretty hard up. Some of them would get employment but for this new regulation about the passage money. No one is going to employ a "boy," and have that hanging over his head.
7961. That is the regulation which does not allow the Inspector of Pacific Islanders to sign on an islander unless the employer makes himself responsible for the extra passage money? He can sign on, but he is responsible according to the present regulation. I do not think the inspector will say anything

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- about it. I am employing "boys," and paying them good wages, and this regulation came out the other day, saying that I am responsible for any further passage-money to take them back. I think that is illegal.
7962. *By Mr. Nielson*: It is not a new regulation? It was only sent out the other day.
7963. It is nothing new; the position is that the Department held that the farmer was responsible all along, but the regulation was never enforced, and the Government are going to enforce it now? You will not find it in the Act. I have brought "boys" to Queensland, and when they left me I had to pay £5 passage-money to take them home again.
7964. Unfortunately the agreement you signed does not say anything about £5—it says that you shall return the "boys"? Well, £5 was supposed to be sufficient.
7965. *By the Chairman*: It was in those days? Why did they allow me to go on in the belief that £5 was sufficient and then spring this on me when I was giving my "boys" 12s. a week? No farmer would pay 12s. a week and pay another £5 on top of that. It is most unfair. Of course it is on a par with everything else so far as employers are concerned.
7966. *By Mr. Nielson*: The extra money now is £2? If it was only £1 it is not fair. I would not have given my "boys" so much if I had known I had to pay more passage-money.
7967. But you were in just the same position as the Department—the Department would not have known about it only they took counsel's opinion lately? It should not require a legal opinion to be taken. It should be so clear that anyone could understand it. Every farmer does not take a legal opinion when he makes an agreement with a "boy." I only engaged the "boys" on the understanding that the passage-money was paid by the first employer.
7968. *By Mr. Paget*: Has the Plane Creek branch of your association discussed the matter of the future labour supply that you require. Not yet. The council to which we send representatives has discussed the matter, and they decided to ask the Minister to get European labour.
7969. They asked the Minister to get 500 immigrants? Yes.
7970. *By the Chairman*: Are you in touch with the immigration system? No; I am a Queenslander.
7971. You do not know anything about the system of nominated immigrants? No.
7972. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you know that two men came up to Mackay last week representing thirty or forty men from one small district in the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales? They will get plenty of work.
7973. *By Mr. Nielson*: Just as these men are able to send two men ahead to look for work for them, the Farmers' Association should be able to send a secretary out to look for labour? I believe several men have been out in the district looking for labour. I believe one man from Homebush has been out looking for labour. He has been to Bundaberg and the Mossman.
7974. We have learned in the last few days that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company are sending gangs up to do work? The thing that will absorb the men will be the building of the railways. The men will take the navvying work first, because it means shorter hours and better pay, and they like it better than sugar work.
7975. *By the Chairman*: Would they not sooner have the sugar work? No. You want a clean liver for cane work. It is hot, tedious, monotonous work. I have cut plenty of cane myself, and I know what it is. I cannot understand a man drinking and cutting cane, too.
7976. *By Mr. Nielson*: Railway construction will not make any difference to you this year? I thought they were going to be built straight away.

(Proserpine.)

THURSDAY, 26 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.
MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

WILLIAM HAROLD RYAN, First-class Constable and Acting Inspector of Pacific Islanders, examined:

- W. H. Ryan.
26 April, 1906.
7977. *By the Chairman*: What is your rank? First-class constable.
7978. You are also Acting Clerk of Petty Sessions and Acting Inspector of Pacific Islanders? Yes.
7979. You produce a return of the islanders in this district? Yes. [*Return produced and handed in.*]
7980. What is the total number of islanders in this district? Forty-one.
7981. Of that number, how many are not under engagement? Twenty-five. They are working for their own countrymen.
7982. *By Mr. Paget*: Is it not necessary that they should be put under agreement when they are working for their own countrymen? There is no rule laid down, so far as I know, respecting their working for other islanders. Mr. Hornbrook informed me of that; but they must be under engagement if they work for anyone else.
7983. *By the Chairman*: I see from your return that nine of them hold tickets of exemption? Yes.
7984. *By Mr. Paget*: How many are farming? Thirteen.
7985. *By the Chairman*: For the most part they are growing cane on royalty? In all cases. None of them own land.
7986. *By Mr. Paget*: Do they ask your advice as to the terms upon which they take up land? They do in some cases, but usually they do not. The leases are registered in the ordinary way. Most of the leases were entered into before I came here.
7987. When was that? Three or four years ago. Some of them, I understand, lease land from the mill company.
7988. *By the Chairman*: Are there many unemployed white labourers about the district now? There are very few.

7989. You saw an account in the Press of a meeting of unemployed which was held here some time W. H. Ryan-ago? Yes, I was present.
7990. Were there any applications for relief at that time? Very few. I only had four during that month. It was very wet at the time, and the farmers could not employ men, so that the labourers were on the market for a while, but they were being absorbed daily at the time the meeting took place.
7991. Did you form any opinion as to whether they really wanted the relief they asked for—I understand they asked for some sort of assistance? Yes; they sent a request to Brisbane.
7992. Was there any necessity for the assistance for which they asked? Not at that particular time. In fact, I reported in the usual way to the Premier. The meeting seemed to be mainly for the object of forming small groups to have workmen for the cane-cutting, or having allotments of their own.
7993. The men present at the meeting were in favour of small settlements of that sort? Yes.
7994. Did any of them suggest the area which they wished to possess? They did not mention any area.
7995. *By Mr. Paget*: How many were present at the meeting? Twenty-eight or thirty.
7996. Were they all distinctly in favour of getting some area on which they could settle? They were not all unemployed who were present. There were Press representatives, millmen, and others present as well. There seemed to be twelve or fourteen genuine unemployed. The latter wished to have some inducement to remain in the district, and to have a place of their own to work on when they could not get work with the farmers.
7997. *By the Chairman*: Was there a scarcity of white labour here last crushing season? No.
7998. Was there sufficient work for the men who were here, or were there many unemployed knocking about? There were a few unemployed. There was a number of men who would work for a few days and then go "on the drunk," and then they were unemployed for a time.
7999. We have been told that the great trouble here is the number of public-houses, and the enormous temptation to men to drink as soon as they get their money—Is that true? Yes. I consider the public-houses are rather near the mill.
8000. You know the district fairly well, I suppose? Yes.
8001. Are there any places round the district suitable for forming settlements, where men could take up small areas of 30 or 40 acres, and make homes for themselves? The only place I know is on Brandy Creek, in the parish of Conway.
8002. *By Mr. Paget*: Are they Crown lands? Yes. Saltwater Creek is said to be a splendid place, but it is difficult of access.
8003. *By the Chairman*: How far are the lands in the parish of Conway from here? It would be over 6 miles from the tramline.
8004. Is not the tramway going to be extended? Yes.
8005. How far will that be from the extension? Six miles. Land has been taken up greatly in the last two years.
8006. I do not mean so much for cane-growers—Do you think it will be suitable for men to work on, so that their labour will be available to the district? Yes.
8007. How far would the Conway lands be from here? Twelve miles.
8008. *By Mr. Paget*: The land would be suitable for growing small crops, such as maize, potatoes, and vegetables? Yes; and cane, too.
8009. But we are not speaking of cane—Would a man be able to grow small garden crops to assist him when he is not wanted on the canefields? Yes; it is good land.
8010. *By the Chairman*: You act as land agent here? No; there is no land agent here.
8011. Where is the land agent? At Bowen.

ROBERT CHARLES DAGG, Cane Farmer, examined:

R. C. Dagg.

8012. *By the Chairman*: What area have you got? I have got a 380-acre block.
8013. How much have you got under cane? 26 acres.
8014. *By Mr. Paget*: Is that the total area of your cultivation? Yes.
8015. Is yours all cane land? No; some of it is not cane land.
8016. What did you crush last year? 397 tons.
8017. From how many acres? 15 acres.
8018. White or black labour? White labour.
8019. Did you do it by contract? Partly contract and partly wages.
8020. What did you pay for the contract work? Some 4s. 6d. and some 6s.
8021. What sort of crops were they? The 4s. 6d. per ton crop was at the bottom of a hill, and the 6s. per ton high up, and very hard to cut.
8022. How much to the acre did it go? Both of them went 25 tons to the acre, and perhaps more than that.
8023. How did the men get the cane from the hills to the drays at the foot of the hill? They had to carry it.
8024. Very far? Yes.
8025. Three or four chains? Yes.
8026. You did not shoot it down? I shot some of it down and damaged it in the process. That accounted for the high price.
8027. *By the Chairman*: What did you pay for wages? 30s. a week and found, and 5s. a day.
8028. Do you know what wages the men made at the contract work? Something about 35s. a week, but I am not sure.
8029. What are you paying men for ordinary field work? £1 a week and found.
8030. Had you any difficulty in getting what labour you required last year? Yes; I had some difficulty, but it was owing to having to rush the crop off at the finish.
8031. Did you get the labour? Yes.
8032. Is there any scarcity of labour about here just now? Not just now.
8033. Do you anticipate any shortage in the future? Yes, as there are not so many men here now as there were last year, but it is a difficult thing to say.
8034. The sergeant has been telling us that there was a meeting held here with the idea of bringing under the notice of the Government the propriety of opening up land for settlement for men who live in the district, so that they can have their families here and their labour will be always available? Yes.

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- R. C. Dagg. 8035. Do you think it would be a useful scheme to have men settle in the district in that way? I think so.
- 26 April, 1906. 8036. What area do you think a man would require to settle on? To grow cane?
8037. Not necessarily to grow cane, but to grow a few things in his odd time, such as pumpkins and potatoes? 30 to 50 acres would do for a good man.
8038. You are a member of the Farmers' Association? I am the president.
8039. Are you appointed to represent them here to-day? Yes.
8040. Has your association taken any steps towards making the wants of the district in respect to labour known in the Southern part of the State or in the other States? Not so far.
8041. You do not think there is cause for any serious anxiety? There is plenty of time.
8042. At what time will you require the labour? At the end of July or August. It is probable a lot of men will come here later on, although there does not seem to be a great supply now.
8043. You think there is no immediate hurry? No.
8044. Have you fixed the scale of wages you will pay? Yes; the scale is fixed.
8045. Have you a workers' union here? I have been told there has been one formed, but I cannot say.

The witness was handed the following report from the "Proserpine Guardian":—

Proserpine Farmers' Association agreed to following rates at a recent meeting.—For youths, from 7s. 6d. to 15s. per week and found; for field hands, other than harvesters, 20s. per week and found; for cutters, minimum 27s. 6d. and maximum 32s. 6d. per week and found. The number of hours to be worked were fixed at ten hours for five days, eight hours Saturday—or fifty-three hours for the week. Cane-cutting prices were fixed at 3s. 3d. per ton for 15 tons and upwards to the acre; 3s. 6d. per ton from 10 to 15 tons to the acre; and 4s. per ton under 10 tons.

8046. *By Mr. Paget:* Is that a true report of the scale adopted by the Farmers' Association? It is not quite correct. It gives the minimum for cutters at 27s. 6d. per week.
8047. Yes; and the maximum 32s. 6d. per week? I was not present at the meeting myself, but I think the minimum was fixed at 25s. a week. I am the chairman of the United Association, and I am told that 25s. a week was the minimum fixed by the Proserpine Association.
8048. There are two associations then? There are associations all over the place. There is an association here and three outside ones, and they all send delegates to the United Association, and I am chairman of the united body.
8049. You have practically passed the scale fixed by the farmers at present? Yes.
8050. Have the farmers met the working men and discussed this matter? No.
8051. At present you are not aware whether these rates will be acceptable to the worker or not? No.
8052. Have the farmers and workers during the past crushing season worked under a scale of wages, or does each one pay on his own? Principally on our own; but some pay according to that scale, I think.
8053. It seems there has been a fair supply of white labour all these years at Proserpine? Yes.
8054. White labour has made for Proserpine as one of the districts where they can get work? Yes.
8055. And you have not had serious difficulty in getting labour? No.
8056. Were the men satisfied? Yes; I think so.
8057. You are aware that there are 5,000 or 6,000 men working in the sugar industry who are liable to be deported? Yes.
8058. That will make a shortage in the labour supply for the industry? Yes.
8059. At the present time there are not a large number of kanakas employed in this district? No.
8060. But they are employed in other districts? Yes.
8061. And their places must be supplied by white men? Yes.
8062. Do you not think it would be advisable for your association to take steps as to the future to supply yourselves with white labour? I think it would be.
8063. You know that there are a number of men working in the industry, some thousands of them, and next year the Federal Act says they may be deported? Yes.
8064. And you have not taken steps to replace them? No.
8065. Would it not be advisable for your association to supply yourselves with labour? It would be advisable to take steps, but so far there has been no anxiety.
8066. Are you going to discuss this matter at all? Yes.
8067. You have not discussed it yet? No.
8068. Do you think there is a sufficient surplus of white labour in the State to fill the places of those men who are to go out of the industry? That is a very difficult question. I think there are sufficient in the State, but they will not come here.
8069. Why will they not come here? They do not like it. There are plenty of men out West, but they will not come down here.
8070. Unfortunately during several years past, work has been very scarce in the West, owing to the small number of sheep, and large numbers of Western workers have been employed in the sugar districts? That is just my idea. A lot of Western men have been here.
8071. Do you not think they will continue to come? When the West gets back to its normal condition, and employment is plentiful out there, they will not come here.
8072. Is that an opinion you have formed from your contact with Western workers? I have been in the West for many years myself, and I have met several of them here. Some of them like the place, and have settled down, but the majority of them get away back.
8073. They prefer the work they have been used to? Yes.
8074. It has been stated in evidence that Western workers prefer working in the cane fields to working in the West, provided the inducement is sufficient? I am very doubtful of that. Men from the West have told me that they would not stop here. On the other hand, some settle down and are quite satisfied.
8075. You have really given no consideration to the labour supply for the future? Not so far.
8076. Have you a labour bureau here? No.
8077. If you want twenty or thirty men, how do you manage? Sometimes we have to go and look for them. Sometimes they come to us. It is all done on a happy-go-lucky style.
8078. Do you not think that some system should be devised by which the unemployed in the other parts of the State could be induced to come to the cane fields? Certainly.
8079. If the Government Labour Bureau was better organised, and there was a branch in this district, do you think the unemployed and employers would make use of it? I think so.

8080. If thirty or forty men were wanted, and there were men in Rockhampton wanting work who had no means to pay their passage, how would you propose to get them here? The Government might give them railway passes. R. C. Dagg.
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8091. But there is no railway beyond Rockhampton? I do not see any other way of getting them here except paying their fares.
8082. Do you think the employers would pay their fares, to be recouped by the men when they were paid? I do not see any other way of doing it, although it is risky.
8083. *By the Chairman:* In that case the employers would have to engage the men for a definite time—three or six months—to give the men time to earn the money? Quite so.
8084. You could not engage a man, and then, when he came, say that you did not want him? That would not do; but, on the other hand, you would want to engage men who were some good.
8085. *By Mr. Paget:* You would have to make the officer in Rockhampton your agent for the purpose of engaging men? We should have to do something like that.
8086. Have you any idea of the number of white men likely to be required in the district during the crushing season? Not the slightest.
8087. A lot of the men who find work here during the crushing season leave the district after the crushing season is over? Yes. They cannot stop here all the year.
8088. *By the Chairman:* Then a system of land settlement would assist you to cure that? Yes.
8089. *By Mr. Nielson:* When do you do your planting here? I am a hill man, and we plant all the year.
8090. During the crushing season, too? We try to avoid that. We are generally too busy.
8091. Do you not think that, if the farmers generally tried to keep all the work that would keep till the off season, they could do a great deal in the way of inducing men to remain in the district? Yes; but sometimes you cannot very well keep work. For instance, if you want to plant "misse," you must do it before the other cane grows high, or else it will smother the new plants.
8092. When do you plant? The usual planting season is from Christmas right up to the crushing season, but on the hills it is nearly any time.
8093. Who supplies wood to the mill? They called fortenders this year. Anybody can take contracts—farmers or working men.
8094. Do you know any farmers here who have contracts to cut wood for the mill, and who employ black labour? I am not aware of any.
8095. *By the Chairman:* Are your lands mortgaged to the mill, or are you associated with it in any way? In no way whatever.
8096. You have nothing to do with it except as a customer? I get a lien on a crop perhaps, but there is no mortgage on my land.

WILLIAM GROSSKREUTZ, Cane Farmer, examined:

8097. *By the Chairman:* Are you a cane farmer? I am.
8098. What is the area of your farm? 127 acres.
8099. How much is under cane? 40 acres.
8100. How much did you cut last year? 25 acres.
8101. What tonnage of cane did you cut? 283 tons 10 cwt.
8102. Did you cut it with white or black labour? White labour.
8103. By contract or day labour? Day labour.
8104. What did you pay? 30s a week and rations.
8105. Were you satisfied with the men you had? Not altogether.
8106. Well, on the whole? On the whole I had to be.
8107. What was your objection to them? Some of them went away after they were paid, and got drunk.
8108. It was not that they could not do the work, but that they would not? They could do it, but they did not. They went away and got drunk, and did not come back.
8109. Do you anticipate a shortage of labour this season? If the kanakas are deported I believe there will be a shortage of labour, but I believe there is a great deal of labour in the Commonwealth if the men were only let alone; but, as a rule, you have the agitator who sets the labourer against the farmer, and does all in his power to wreck the sugar industry. As evidence of that, I have a letter which I wish read.
- [Witness tendered a copy of the "Prosperine Guardian" of Saturday, 20th April, containing a letter signed by M. S. Munro.]
8110. *By the Chairman:* I am afraid that the letter is inadmissible—it seems to be a tirade by someone who calls himself a labourer? He calls himself a labourer, but he is what is called "a bird of passage."
8111. Did you hear Mr. Dagg give his evidence? Yes.
8112. He talked of men being induced to settle here with their families so that their labour will be here when you want it? I approve of it. It is a very good idea.
8113. How much land would you allow such a man to take up? 40 acres would be plenty for a man.
8114. *By Mr. Nielson:* Then why is not 40 acres enough for you? If a man wants to go and work outside, he does not want so much as the man who employs labour.
8115. Do you think men only want to look for work outside for the rest of their lives? No. A good honest worker will not want to work for men all his life.
8116. *By the Chairman:* You think that would do to begin with? Yes. I understand you asked me what would be sufficient for a man who goes outside to look for work, and I reckon 40 acres would be sufficient. Do you not think so, too?
8117. *By Mr. Nielson:* If he had 400 acres of some of the land I saw, it would not be of any use to him? He would want to go outside and work then.
8118. *By Mr. Paget:* The wages these men would get would help them to improve their farms? Yes.
8119. And, by and by, if they wish to go in for agriculture they can do so? Yes.
8120. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is there any good land to select out here? Yes; there is any amount in the parish of Cudway.
8121. Fit for cane? Fit for anything.

W.
Grosskreutz.
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- W. Grosskreutz. 1822. *By Mr. Paget*: Would there be a good sale for maize if the workers grew it? At certain times there is plenty of sale for it. You can always sell it in Mackay or Bowen.
- 26 April, 1906. 1823. Do you represent the Farmers' Association to-day? I am vice-president of the United Association and president of the association in town.
1824. *By the Chairman*: You saw the scale of wages published in the *Proserpine Guardian*? Yes; it was fixed under my chairmanship.
1825. *By Mr. Paget*: Are the wages correct as mentioned in the paper? They are all correct as published with the exception that the minimum was fixed at 25s. a week, and not 27s. 6d. as it says here. I was chairman when that resolution was passed.
1826. *By the Chairman*: That is for canecutters? Yes.
1827. *By Mr. Paget*: Is your association taking steps to meet the canecutters so that these rates can be confirmed? No; because the canecutters have not made any move to meet us, but that is what the farmers intend to pay.
1828. *By the Chairman*: Have you made arrangements for cutting your cane this year? I have let out a certain portion of it on contract, and the rest I can do with my own family.
1829. What contract did you let? I never let the loading. I pay 1s. 6d. per ton for cutting. The labour market does not trouble me as I have enough sons to do it. The labour supply does not trouble me at all, but as I represent a certain association, I simply give my views.

JOSEPH COOPER, Cane Farmer, examined:

- J. Cooper. 1830. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your farm? 59 acres.
- 26 April, 1906. 1831. How much have you under cane? 50 acres.
1832. How much did you cut last year? 27 acres.
1833. For a tonnage of? 310 tons.
1834. Did you cut it by white labour? Yes; by day wages.
1835. What wages did you pay? 30s. a week and found.
1836. Were you satisfied with the class of labour that you got? I do not know.
1837. Is it simply a question of temperance or intemperance, or were they lazy? They were incompetent and could not cut cane.
1838. They were new to the work? Yes.
1839. And when they got into it how did they shape? They were just the same; in fact, they would not get into it.
1840. *By Mr. Paget*: Did you shift them? I had to keep the mill going with a certain amount of my tonnage of cane, and it did not matter whether I liked them or not I had to keep them in order to keep up the supply.
1841. *By the Chairman*: Have you made any arrangements for taking off the cane this year? Partly.
1842. Will you let it by contract next year? Certainly.
1843. *By Mr. Paget*: Was your cane cut on flat country or billy country? It was flat country, as flat as that table.
1844. What did it cost to cut it? 6s. 6d. per ton. It was only a poor crop.
1845. And you averaged 11 tons to the acre? Yes.
1846. Was it trashed or untrashed? It was untrashed.
1847. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many men did you have working for you? Three, and they averaged 25 cwt. per man per day.
1848. *By the Chairman*: You worked at this sort of thing yourself? Yes.
1849. What do you think a man ought to cut in a day on a fair crop? On an 18-ton crop he ought to cut 3 tons a day.
1850. *By Mr. Nielson*: But what ought he to cut on an 11-ton crop? Two tons a day would be a fair thing then. It is not a fair thing to cut only 25 cwt. a day. I know what I can do myself, and I know what can be done.
1851. *By the Chairman*: What do you think about settling people on the land so as to have their labour handy? It is the only salvation of the industry.
1852. What sized area would you be in favour of giving to a man? If the men are going to work in the mill and settle down on the land, I should say that a small area would be better than a large one; because, if they have a large area, they might as well go into the business straight away, and start sugar-growing.
1853. *By Mr. Nielson*: And that would be all the better for the country? Certainly, it would.
1854. *By Mr. Paget*: What area would you say? 10 acres. I should say, if men want a bigger area than that, let them go for it by all means.
1855. *By the Chairman*: Do you not think a man might be content for the first year or two to grow food for himself, and then afterwards to increase it? Yes; and have not all the pioneer farmers done the same thing? I had to do that myself, and there are many others who did the same thing.
1856. *By Mr. Nielson*: How long have you grown cane? Since 1893.
1857. So last year you had reason to be dissatisfied with the white labour? Yes. For years I had fairly good luck with white labour. The previous year we had better crops and struck good men.
1858. *By the Chairman*: It is a question of luck then? Yes.
1859. Is it not a fact that you have more public-houses here now? These men would not drink at all. They could not do the work or they would not do it. They were strong able-bodied men, too.
1860. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you here as a representative of the Farmers' Association? I am the secretary of the Proserpine Farmers' Association.
1861. Mr. Dagg told us that your association has not discussed the question of obtaining labour in the future? We have only recently reorganised. There used to be an association years ago, and we have only recently reorganised, but that will come up sooner or later. It must be discussed as a matter of fact, but we have not had time to discuss it yet.
1862. Would it not be advisable to bring it up sooner rather than later? Certainly; but we must have time to get the thing into working order. Personally, I think it will be a matter of compulsion to get other labour, because I do not think we have sufficient in Queensland.
1863. Where can such labour be procured? The majority of the members of the Farmers' Association are in favour of immigration from Europe in case of a shortage.
1864. *By Mr. Nielson*: They are quite in favour of the Government doing it, too, are they not? Certainly. The Government have to do everything, and they might as well do that, too.

J. Cooper.

26 April, 1906.

8165. *By the Chairman*: Have you had any experience of Italian labour? Never.
8166. Are you a married man? I am, with a family of eight children.
8167. Do your wife and children have good health? Every one of them.
8168. You do not complain of this climate? I never did. I can work in the sugar fields, and it has never harmed me. My children are strong and robust, and I think my wife will take the cake on the Proserpine as far as health goes. The unfortunate part of it is that my children are all girls instead of boys, or I would not want any labour at all.
8169. Is there a doctor here? There are two doctors.
8170. You have no hospital? We had, but the Government got too short of cash, and refused to give us the endowment, and so we had to close it. The farmers did not want it for themselves; it was for the people coming here.
8171. *By Mr. Paget*: You think that the Government should introduce immigrants if there is a shortage of labour here? I certainly think it is "up to them" to try and get immigrants from Europe or some other place.
8172. Which Government—the State or the Commonwealth? It appears it does not affect the Commonwealth Government. They do not seem to bother their heads about it.
8173. They are bothering their heads about the deportation of the kanakas? Certainly. I feel convinced in my own mind that there will be a shortage. If 6,000 kanakas are to be deported, although it may not affect the Proserpine, it will affect the sugar industry as a whole.
8174. You think that probably you will not be able to get sufficient labour owing to the people in other districts requiring part of the available white labour? Exactly. We are not near the centres of population like Mackay, Bundaberg, or Burdekin are, and we have to be satisfied with labour that other districts will not take. We do not get the best class of labour.
8175. In the event of the State Government saying they are not prepared to pay the passages of immigrants, do you think your association might discuss whether it might not be advisable to pay one-third of the passage-money, the State one-third, and the labourer one-third? That would be a very good idea.
8176. Presuming immigrants are required? But would not that violate the Commonwealth Act regarding contract labour? If I pay to bring a man out from England, I want to be certain that he will work for me, and not for someone else.
8177. You can do that, provided you can satisfy the Commonwealth Minister that suitable labour cannot be obtained in the Commonwealth, and you undertake to pay the current rate of wages? If I engage persons in the old country to work for me, shall I not be violating the Act?
8178. You have to get a permit first? Well, I think something of that sort will have to be done if the industry is to carry on.
8179. Is it advisable for the employers to always look to the Government? Not at all.
8180. Should they not help themselves to a certain extent? Of course, they should help themselves. But they would have to get either one Government or the other to help them, as the Farmers' Association cannot institute a system of immigration.
8181. The whole of the associations might discuss the question, and see which is the best way of going about it; but you have not taken any steps yet towards letting people in the south know that they can get work here? But if the people in the south can get fair wages where they are, they will prefer to stop there rather than work in the tropics for a little more; and we cannot afford to offer more wages than we are doing, because the industry cannot afford to pay any more. Our wages compare favourably with those paid in any district in Queensland, and we get from 2s. to 3s. a ton less for our cane. Taking that into consideration, we are really paying more than we ought to.
8182. *By Mr. Nielson*: You are getting 14s. a ton for cane? Yes, last year; but for years we got 9s.
8183. Are you aware that in the Woongarra Scrub the most that has ever been paid is 12s. 6d. a ton? I presume they get just double the return to the acre that we get.
8184. It does not weigh so much? Are they paying the same wages as we are paying?
8185. Very nearly as much; as a matter of fact, we have evidence that one man paid £1 12s. 6d. a week? You will find that some men on the Proserpine pay the whole of what they get for their crop for cutting it.
8186. *By Mr. Paget*: Is there anything further you wish to say? Last year I had a good worker who could at any time cut his 3 tons a day, but there were two other men alongside him who either could not or would not do it. The result was that I got 25 cwt. where I should have got 7 or 8 tons. Those men kept the other man back. I should like to see men like that get credentials.
8187. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did he ask you for a reference? No.
8188. What assistance would credentials be? It would prove to the next farmer he went to that he was a genuine worker.
8189. *By the Chairman*: You would not employ a man unless he had credentials if such a system were in force? I would not give credentials to men who could not cut more than 25 cwt. a day. If I sacked a man last year, I could not get another.

JOSEPH BUSUTTIN, Cane Farmer, examined:

J. Busuttin.

26 April, 1906.

8190. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer.
8191. What is the area of your farm? 119 acres.
8192. How much have you under cane? A little over 40 acres.
8193. Did you cut any last year? I cut 570 tons from 30 acres.
8194. Did you employ white or black labour? White labour.
8195. Day work or contract? Contract.
8196. How much did you pay? 5s. 3d. a ton to cut and load.
8197. Is it level or hilly country? Mixed.
8198. Have you any idea what they made at it? I gave the contract to two chaps, and they had men working for them, but I could not say what they made.
8199. Have you made any arrangements for taking off your cane this year? Partly; but I have not quite settled yet.
8200. What are you paying for field labour? In the off season 30s. a week, and find themselves.

- J. Busuttin. 8201. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you find the men in cooking utensils and house accommodation? House accommodation, but not cooking utensils.
 26 April, 1906. 8202. Are you representing any association? Yes, I represent the Farmers' Association.
 8203. *By the Chairman*: Do you anticipate a scarcity of labour this year? There are rumours to that effect, and there are not so many labourers knocking about the district as there were at this time last year.
 8204. I understand there are very few unemployed about just now? Very few.
 8205. *By Mr. Paget*: How many years have you been canegrowing? About thirteen years; but I have been among it for twenty-three years.
 8206. Have you always grown it by white labour? No; only during the last three years.
 8207. *By the Chairman*: Are you a married man? Yes.
 8208. Have you a family? Yes.
 8209. Have your wife and children fair health? They enjoy very good health.

WALTER WIX, Cane Farmer, examined:

- W. Wix. 8210. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your farm? 151 acres.
 26 April, 1906. 8211. How much of it is under cane? About 22 acres.
 8212. How much did you cut last year? 320 odd tons.
 8213. What acreage? 16 tons.
 8214. White labour? Yes.
 8215. Contract? Contract to start with and wages after.
 8216. What was the price of the contract to cut and load into trucks—was it all scrub? Yes, hilly scrub. There was some trouble over the contract, and the contractor threw it up.
 8217. And what wages did you give for day labour? 30s. a week and tucker.
 8218. *By Mr. Paget*: How did that pan out? I was out of pocket. It cost me 10s. 3d. per ton. I lost on the contract through the contractor throwing it up, and I had to wait three or four days for labour.
 8219. It cost you 10s. 3d. per ton? Yes; with the loss. That was allowing for what I lost.
 8220. What loss do you mean? The year before I got a little over 400 tons off the same acreage, and that cost me 8s. 1d.
 8221. With white labour? Yes, with white labour.
 8222. At what wages? At 6s. 6d. per ton. I find my own carter and horses.
 8224. You gave 6s. 6d. per ton to cut and load on to the trucks, you cart it to the trucks and the contractor has to load it on to the trucks? Yes.
 8225. Does he load by derrick? No, by hand.
 8226. Do you think it will pay you at the present price of cane, even with the bonus, if it costs you 10s. 3d. per ton? No. It did not pay me last year.
 8227. Will you be able to continue hill cultivation? Not unless we have different labour.
 8228. You know the conditions? The year before last I had contract labour, and that paid me. Of course I had no bother at all then.
 8229. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did it pay you to pay 8s. 1d. per ton? Yes; because it only took me half a day to do the carting, and the carter was able to do odd jobs.
 8230. *By Mr. Paget*: You were getting 18s. 8d. for your cane? Yes.
 8231. And you worked on ratoons? Yes, on ratoons. If it was plant cane it would have cost me much less.
 8232. Your crop averaged 20 tons to the acre last year? Yes.
 8233. It was not a bad crop? No.
 8234. *By Mr. Nielson*: Can you explain to me why it cost you 10s. 1d.? I had to lose time to get fresh men for labour.
 8235. How do you value that time distributed over 320 tons? The mill took 60 tons off for me which did not interfere with me at all.
 8236. How much did you deduct for the loss of time? What it cost me going about for the men.
 8237. But how much? I reckoned it was about 6s. a day.
 8238. How many days were you idle? I lost 18s.
 8239. Well, deducting the 60 tons that the mill took off, that leaves you with 260 tons, and as you lost 18s. that is about 1d. per ton on the 260 tons; how do you make up the balance? That is how I worked it out.
 8240. The contract price was 6s. 6d. per ton? Yes.
 8241. You do not seem to know how much it cost you? I must have left something out.
 8242. I do not think you left anything out? I must have.
 8243. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you would like to speak about? I think there will be a shortage of labour this year.
 8244. Some gentlemen here have been advocating the settlement of labouring men on the land, and small areas of 40 acres have been mentioned on which they should settle, in order to keep their labour in the district—Do you approve of that? Yes; they could put 30 acres under cane, and the other 10 acres would do for odd crops. That would be to start with.
 8245. How would it help you with your labour? It is according to whether they have any families when they settle down.
 8246. It has been suggested in various localities that the workers, instead of having to roam about looking for work, should be induced by some means to settle on homes of their own on small areas, not necessarily for canegrowing, but so that they can grow small crops, and if their labour is wanted they can go out to work and earn money? If they had a few acres like that, they could help us with our crops.

EDWARD BOTLE, General Labourer, examined:

- E. Boyle. 8247. *By the Chairman*: Do you come here as the representative of the other labourers? We have no organisation.
 26 April, 1906. 8248. You have spoken about it? Yes.
 8249. And they have decided that you shall be their mouthpiece? Yes.

F. Boyle.

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8250. How long have you been in this district? Seven months.
8251. About how many men outside do you represent? Do you mean unemployed?
8252. Are you unemployed? At present I am.
8253. How long have you been unemployed? About a fortnight.
8254. You are looking for ordinary field work? Yes.
8255. What wages are you willing to take? £1 a week and found.
8256. You cannot get that? No.
8257. About how many men are there in the same position as yourself now? I think I could find about fifty.
8258. Where would you find them? Around the mill, and along the river banks. They are camped all over the place.
8259. The acting sergeant of police has not been able to find fifty? Lately, there have been more arrivals.
8260. How soon could you muster those fifty men? By to-morrow night.
8261. We hope to be in Mackay by to-morrow night—Could you get them by the morning? No.
8262. Have you been in constant work up till now? No. Since the crushing time it has been very hard to get work. I may say that since Christmas I have tried my best all over the place to get work, and I have been able to get only five weeks' employment.
8263. *By Mr. Paget*: And you stuck to the jobs you had since Christmas until you were no longer wanted? Yes, each one.
8264. *By the Chairman*: Have these fifty men a little bit of money? Most of them are living on credit from the stores for rations and anything they want.
8265. Are they strangers in the district? A good many of them are. A lot of them are men who were here last year.
8266. Do they give them credit at the stores? Yes; the business people are very good that way.
8267. You think there will be plenty of labour here, I suppose? I am afraid there will not be in crushing time.
8268. How would you suggest getting over the difficulty? Men would require more inducement in the off season to wait here until the next crushing season.
8269. What inducement would you offer them to stay in the off season? Principally more constant employment.
8270. You do not complain of the wages which you get? Yes; I complain of the wages. The farmers pay a man 5s. a day, and he has to do his own cooking. They seem to think that is equal to £1 a week and found, but it is not by a long way.
8271. Are men engaged at 30s. a week and find themselves? Yes; in the off season. You have to get up before daylight and get your breakfast; then you have to get your dinner in the middle of the day, and at night you have to cook your tea. Then you have to travel miles on Saturday night to town to get your rations.
8272. *By Mr. Paget*: Could you not be supplied by your employer? It seems not.
8273. *By the Chairman*: You dislike the system of being paid 30s. a week and find yourself? Yes; and most of the other men here are of the same opinion.
8274. What sort of accommodation have you to sleep in? It is not good in most places, but the men are easily satisfied, as a rule.
8275. You do not complain of it? No. So long as the rain does not get at me I am not particular.
8276. When you say that you would prefer being paid 20s. a week and found, do you mean employment at that rate from one crushing season to another? They would have much more inducement to settle.
8277. Is there any other inducement you could suggest? When a man has to come to town for his rations, he cannot carry out any vegetables. He cannot even get a potato, and he is living all the time on beef and bread. It is not good to have no vegetables.
8278. You think the Farmers' Association should adopt the principle of fixing wages at 20s. a week and found? Yes.
8279. The rate fixed by the Farmers' Association for field hands other than harvesters is 20s. a week and found? That is what they have arranged for the ensuing season, but it does not apply to the present time.
8280. If men had land on which they might settle and do a bit of work in the off season, would that constitute an inducement to them to settle down in the district? A good many would certainly grasp such an opportunity.
8281. Even single men? Yes.
8282. *By Mr. Paget*: You might manage to get small areas under special lease? Most of the single men would want a little help to begin with if they took up forest land. They would require horses to plough it, and most of the single men have not money for that.
8283. *By the Chairman*: Should not the single men have more money than the married men? They have not got it.
8284. *By Mr. Paget*: Perhaps arrangements might be made for the formation of groups under the Special Agricultural Selections Act? That is what I would advocate. But, instead of putting them on land outside the sugar areas, it would be much better to give them 10 acres of scrub land within reach of the tramlines, and let them grow sugar. It would be better for the mill and better for the men.
8285. *By the Chairman*: We have heard about a lot of the men being very intemperate—Do you know anything about the habits of the men who come here to work? I know a good deal about it.
8286. Would you call them extraordinarily intemperate men? I do not want to say that they are all very intemperate.
8287. Are you a Good Templar yourself? I am not.
8288. You take a fair thing? No; sometimes I take too much.
8289. Do not you think it would be better for the men if there were not so many public-houses? I think it would make very little difference if there were only one.
8290. The farmers complain that the men are unreliable because they get on the spree after pay-day, and do not come back to work up to time—I suppose it is a *bonafide* cause of complaint? It does happen, but men who are really satisfied with the conditions under which they are working very seldom leave their work to go and drink.

E. Boyle. 8291. If the men were more comfortable do you think they would not drink so much? If they were more comfortable they would rather stick to their jobs; but if they are not satisfied with their conditions they say, "I am going to sling this; I am tired of it"; and off they go, and the first publican gets their money.

26 April, 1906. 8292. Could the farmers do anything to make the men more comfortable? If the farmers would find the men in food, they would not want to come into town to get their food, and they would not have the temptation of being near a public-house.

8293. If the men had their food cooked for them, would they be much more satisfied? Yes.

8294. Do men carry tents with them as a rule? Most of them do, but if they get any sort of a hut to camp in they will not bother pitching their tents.

8295. Would not a clean tent on the grass be better than an old hut? I would much rather have it. The cooking accommodation is also out of the question. A man has no cover, so that on a wet morning he has great trouble in making a fire.

8296. Could you not make use of the farmer's kitchen? I fancy he would think I was intruding.

8297. *By Mr. Paget*: Surely these are matters for mutual agreement? But work has been so scarce since the crushing was over, and there are so many men looking for it, that they are glad to get a job of any sort, without making complaints.

8298. Food is cooked for the men who work for the mill, is it not? Yes, lately.

8299. Very few of the mill hands, except those who are married, and live with their families, are paid a fixed wage, and find themselves? The arrangement with men working on the tramway outside is that they get a certain amount per day, the company find them in food and a cook, and charge the men a reasonable sum per week.

8300. Do the men whose food is cooked for them, and who, I presume, have fairly comfortable quarters, stick to their work better than the men who do not have their food cooked for them? They certainly do. I think it would require a recommendation from the Governor to get a job at the mill now. They stick well.

8301. Then the old trouble about men not turning up to their work on a Monday morning does not exist now in connection with the mill? I do not see that it occurs here. The men now employed in the mill are men who have been previously employed, and Mr. Hindmarsh, the manager, cannot employ as many of them as are willing to go to work.

8302. They like to go back again year after year? Yes; the men get very good treatment from the mill company.

8303. Do you know how many men there are employed in the fields just now? Being so short a time in the district, I could not give you an accurate estimate.

8304. You say that you have only had five weeks' work in the district, although you have looked for it? A great many of the farmers have no one at all employed just now, although they have told me that, if they could get some assistance from the company, they would be only too glad to employ more men.

8305. They are financially unable to do so? That is so.

8306. It is not the farmers' fault? No; they are willing to do more work if they could get assistance.

8307. You cannot tell us how many more men will be required for the harvesting season? I think it will take 200 more men than there are in the district, but that is only a guess.

8308. *By Mr. Nielson*: Were you canecutting here last season? I came just at the end of the season, and cut till the season was over.

8309. How long were you cutting cane? Thirteen days. I started as soon as I came and finished the crushing.

8310. Had you cut cane before? Yes; I had three years' experience before that in Mackay.

8311. Have you had any experience further South? No.

8312. *By Mr. Paget*: Did you come in from the West to work? No. I landed in Mackay, and was twenty years there.

JOHN MACDONALD, Labourer, examined:

J. Macdonald. 8313. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A labourer.

8314. How long have you been in the district? About two and a-half years.

8315. What are you employed at just now? Getting firewood for the mill.

26 April, 1906. 8316. By contract, I suppose? Yes.

8317. Is the contract likely to last? No. I only had a contract for 100 tons, and a man will finish that in two months.

8318. When do you expect to finish with that? About next Saturday.

8319. Have you been doing it yourself or employing others? Doing it myself.

8320. Could you not get another contract? No.

8321. Then you will be out of a job? Yes; so far as I know.

8322. What do you want to speak about? I would like to have a little to say concerning the labourers in this district.

8323. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you formed a union? No.

8324. *By the Chairman*: How many unemployed are there about the district now? I think the witness who said fifty was not far out.

8325. Where are all these men—could you get them together? Not at once. I dare say there are twenty about the mill at the present moment. The others are in the district.

8327. I wish you would tell these men to see us to-night? They appear to be backward.

8328. But we would like to have a chat with them, and it would be interesting? The mere fact that there is no labour organisation or union of any kind here deters men from speaking openly.

8329. A very important part of our mission is to find out where there is sufficient labour in the sugar districts to replace the kanakas who are going to be deported; and if there are fifty unemployed here, and we do not know it, and we go away with the impression that there are only ten, then we shall be at a loss altogether—Will you try to get the unemployed to come around and see us, as I wish to have a chat with them? I have a good distance to go to-night, as I wish to go back to my camp.

8330. Somebody else will tell the men for you? If you are anxious to see them I will try to muster them and let you see them, so that you can see that what I say is something near the mark.

8331. By having a chat with them we may be able to do something to assist them to find work—Do you think there will be sufficient men here in the crushing season? I do not feel inclined to answer that for

different reasons. There may be many, and there may not be enough, but according to present indications there may be a shortage.

8342. Although there are too many now? Yes.

8343. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you been working about the mill during the crushing season? No.

8344. You have been doing general work? Yes; all outside field work and bush work.

8345. What wages have you been getting? I have been getting good wages and I have done fairly well in the district. I have been chiefly on contract work myself. I have seen men around me far more unlucky than I was, and it was a struggle for them to get along. They were men just as good as I am, and, perhaps, some of them better.

8346. Have you noticed the way these men were treated—Do you think they get fair treatment? Generally speaking, I think the housing accommodation, and, in some cases, the food, could be much better.

8347. Do those who get 30s. a week have to find themselves? Yes; they have to find themselves in cooking utensils and everything else, as far as I know.

8348. Would a man sooner get 20s. and his rations than 30s. and find himself? Yes; most decidedly.

8349. Do you generally agree with the evidence which Mr. Boyle gave? Yes.

8340. Is there anything further you would like to tell us—can you tell us anything about the proposed workmen's homes? Concerning the question of settling a desirable class of men on the land, I think it would be a very good thing to settle them on small blocks of, say, 40 acres each, and fairly good ground.

8341. *By the Chairman:* Are you a single man? Yes.

8342. Is it the sort of thing that single men would go in for? Yes; if it is within the confines of civilisation.

8343. It cannot always be in a main street? But it could be within reasonable carriage distance of a town.

8344. How would 10 or 12 miles out do? Twelve miles at the outside, on a tramline or railway.

8345. *By Mr. Paget:* We have heard a very great deal about the intemperate habits of the men who travel; do you think if these men were settled on the land it would become the means of making them more temperate? I am sure it would. It stands to reason that any sound-thinking man who begins to get a little bit of a home around him will settle down and take a pull on this business that is crippling the country.

8346. You think it would be a great inducement to him to become temperate? Yes.

8347. *By the Chairman:* Are you a teetotaler—I ask you so that I may judge of the value of your evidence? No, I am not a teetotaler.

8348. But you think that excessive intemperance does cripple the industries of the country? Yes, certainly.

8349. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you follow cane-cutting? Yes.

8350. Have you cut in other districts besides this? No.

8351. Do you think the prices offered for contract work or wages are sufficient to induce men to come to this district? No, I do not.

8352. Did you see the scale the farmers have fixed? Yes.

8353. Do you think it is too low? It is too low under the present circumstances. In the first place the crushing season does not last long enough here, and in the second place there is little or nothing to do after the crushing season is done. There are far better districts for the working men to go to than the Proserpine.

8354. Do you think the farmers and settlers here are in a position to alter that? No; I cannot see that they are.

8355. Is there no work that could be done here in the off season? Not so far as I can see. I do not know what employment could be given to men to keep them in the district, and if the men were not given some kind of employment they could not stay.

8356. You think that the inducement is not sufficient to attract them? That is what I think.

8357. Do you think the farmers can afford to pay more than they are offering? I think the farmers could afford to pay a larger minimum than their schedule shows.

8358. *By the Chairman:* What is their minimum? 25s. a week for cane-cutting.

8359. *By Mr. Nielson:* What would you think they could afford to pay? They could afford to pay 30s. a week as the minimum wage for cane-cutting. If they think a man is worth more, then it lies in their discretion whether they give him more or not.

8360. Do you know the average crops in the district? No.

8361. Some go as light as 10 or 12 tons to the acre? Yes.

8362. In a 10-ton crop, what would a man be able to cut and load a day? A good workman could cut and trash 1½ tons a day.

8363. Did you hear Mr. Cooper say that a man should be able to cut and load 2 tons a day on an 11½-ton crop? Yes.

8364. Do you think the average man could do that? I am sure he could not. I was in a gang of three last season, and we were cutting within a stone's throw of Cooper's crop, but ours was a better crop, and heavier per acre, and we could not cut and load 2 tons a day.

8365. *By the Chairman:* You think 1½ tons a day is a fair thing for a man? Yes.

8366. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know the district well? Yes, fairly well.

8367. Do you know of any Crown lands available for settlement? Yes, there are plenty of Crown lands; but still there are some of these places that want a line of communication of some kind. They want a road or something. At Saltwater Creek there is any quantity of land that is suitable for settling men on.

8368. How far is that from here? About 12 miles.

8369. Do you know Cannon Valley? I have only been there once.

8370. *By Mr. Paget:* There are billy scrubs on the Saltwater Creek land, are there not? Yes.

8371. *By the Chairman:* How far would they have to go before they could cross the river with a dray? In a few days the terminus of the tram will be within 1½ miles of the place, or very little more.

8372. Is there plenty of good land there? Any amount.

8373. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is it open to selection? No.

- J. Macdonald. 8374. *By the Chairman:* It is not reserved for selection or any other purpose, is it? No; it is a timber reserve.
8375. *By Mr. Nielson:* If it is going to be thrown open to selection, what areas would you recommend? From 30 to 80 acres, according to the quality of the land.
8376. Would you be inclined to go in for some of the land yourself? Yes.
8377. Do you think other single men would also settle down? A good many would, and more would follow in the near future.
8378. They would have to keep sober if they were to do any good on it? So long as they remained out there, they would be all right. There is another thing that I quite forgot to mention about the 30s a week and find yourself. The men are only paid for actual working days. All wet weather is taken off.
8379. You think it should be £1 a week and found, wet or dry? Yes, except on very special occasions. Sometimes there may be a very heavy downpour—a flood, or something like that, when men cannot work.
8380. *By Mr. Paget:* If it rains continuously for three weeks, you cannot very well go weeding then? That has not happened since I have been here, and I do not believe it will while I remain here. It rarely happens that men cannot be employed in some way or other during such a period.

EDWARD BOYLE, Labourer, further examined:

- E. Boyle. 8381. I think I could put it in a clearer light. If the firmers would allow the men 10s a week, wet or dry, for their food, over and above the £1 a week, that would be a fair thing? At present, if it comes a wet week, a man has to lie idle and find his own food, and the following week he has to pay for two weeks' tucker, so that he is actually working one week for nothing.

JAMES REID, Cane Farmer, examined:

- J. Reid. 8382. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer.
8383. What is the size of your farm? Previous to this year I was working a leasehold of 120 acres, comprised in two farms. One lease for 30 acres lapsed last December. I now have 92 acres under lease, and I am purchasing 35 acres on terms from the South Australian Land Mortgage and Agency Company.
8384. What are you paying? £5 per acre, with interest at 6 per cent. added.
8385. *By Mr. Paget:* Is the land that you are purchasing under crop? There are some potatoes and a bit of corn.
8386. Was the corn given in? There was nothing on it when I took it.
8387. *By the Chairman:* Was it cleared when you took it? Part of it was. That was my reason for taking it. It carries no shares in the Proserpine Central Mill.
8388. Are you a married man? No.
8389. What labour were you employing last year? I employed one man all the year round, and I paid him £1 a week and found. The man I have at present is a good one, and I am paying him 22s. 6d. a week and found.
8390. *By Mr. Nielson:* Wet or dry? Wet and dry—no rise in the crushing.
8391. *By the Chairman:* Have you ever worked for wages? Yes.
8392. Which did you prefer—£1 a week and found, or 30s. a week and find yourself? When I was out wages I used to get £1 a week and found. I was cooking for twenty-one men on the Proserpine for Mr. Phaff, and then my wages were 25s. a week. I put in the whole of the crushing season, and I think the cane-cutters got 22s. 6d. a week. I was one of the first to register for the bounty on the Proserpine. That was in 1902, and since then I have employed nothing but white labour. My wages have been 30s. a week and found in the crushing season, with wet days taken out, but it is seldom that there is wet weather during the crushing season. I always try to find other work for the men when it is wet. Previous to my coming here in 1896 I worked at sawmilling on Whitsunday Island, and got 25s. a week as engine-driver and helping to load the boats. The ordinary labourers got £1 a week and found, wet days stopped. I worked in the Bowen district for nearly seventeen years, and that was always the rule. But you always got your tucker—rations I never had. The talk here has been that the farmers were stopping the tucker and compelling the men to pay for them. I think that is absurd. There are very few men here working on £1 a week and rations unless they are on contract. The farmers mostly find their men, and we reckon 10s. a week for that.
8393. Do you think it a bad thing for men to come into the township to buy their rations? I do not see how you can avoid it.
8394. But do you think it a bad thing for the men? Not necessarily. It all depends on themselves. I can come into town and go out again, or I can come in and stay. I believe there will be a shortage of labour this crushing, unless an additional number of men come here, as I cannot see the men here now who are capable of taking the crop off. Then I believe they are asking exorbitant prices for the cutting, though I have had none come to me, as I have not had any cane to take off.
8395. Are you in a position to form an opinion as to what unemployed labour there is in the district? Not at present. The Press stated that there were between forty and fifty, but I very much doubt it. I believe there are a lot of them employed now in the mill. Then one man stated that there was no work to be got during the slack season. Well, there is always a certain amount of work during that period, though I would not say it would employ enough hands to keep the mill running through the crushing season.

HENRY CRAWSHAY STERRY, Cane Farmer, examined:

- H. C. Sterry. 8396. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your farm? 111 acres.
8397. How much have you under cane? About 40 acres under cultivation.
- 26 April, 1906. 8398. How much cane did you cut last year? 300 tons.
8399. From what acreage? 12 acres.
8400. Did you cut it by white or black labour? White labour.
8401. By contract or otherwise? Contract.
8402. Was it forest land? Yes; all forest land.
8403. At what price? 3s. per ton, to cut and load on to drays.
8404. Was it trashed or untrashed? The greater portion of it was trashed, but there were 10 tons at the end of the season that I allowed 6d. a ton for, because we had to cut it in a short time.

H. C. Sterry.
26 April, 1906.

8405. Have you any idea what wages the men made at it? I do not know for a certainty. It was the H. C. Sterry. first time the man cut cane. He used to average over 3 or 4 tons daily.

8406. *By Mr. Paget:* Did he cut himself? Yes, until nearly the end.

8407. *By the Chairman:* Would he cut and load 3 tons a day? A little over.

8408. *By Mr. Nielson:* It was a 25-ton crop and trashed? Yes.

8409. *By Mr. Paget:* What do you estimate your crop at for the coming season? 240 tons, but they are only ratoons.

8410. Have you made any arrangements about labour? No.

8411. Do you anticipate any trouble with labour? There seems to be a great scarcity. As a rule when it is getting near the crushing season men come along looking for work. We have only about two months to go now, and this is about the time when men come along wanting to know if there is any planting, and see if they can get a job beforehand.

8412. Do you think the conditions in the country are better generally? The men I had before were men who mostly had been out West. Many of them told me that they had been out West, and a good many of them I do not hear of at all now.

8413. You think they are working out West, and that is your reason for thinking there will be a shortage of labour? Yes; many of them told me that.

8414. *By the Chairman:* Do you know that there are fifty idle men about here just now? I do not know where you will find them.

8415. Two witnesses said they could get them by to-morrow night? I do not think they are here. There were a good many men here until about a month ago, and then the mill took fifteen new hands on, and told the remainder they would require no more until the crushing season started, and a good many went away.

8416. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many do you think were here then? It is impossible for me to say. There must have been over twenty camped at that time around the mill.

8417. *By Mr. Paget:* There seemed to be more unemployed at that time than there are now? Yes.

8418. *By Mr. Nielson:* Were there some Western men among the men you refer to? I do not know these men.

8419. *By Mr. Paget:* How long have you been growing cane with white labour? Since the very start of the bonus in 1902. I registered directly.

8420. What wages are you in the habit of paying to men on general cultivation? £1 a week and find them, or 30s. a week and let them find themselves.

8421. Which do you pay? At the pre-ent time I pay one man one way, and another another way.

8422. *By the Chairman:* Would you just as soon pay 20s. a week and find him, or give him the 30s.? I would rather that they find themselves.

8423. *By Mr. Paget:* Why? The men prefer it.

8424. We have had evidence directly opposite to that this afternoon? Yes?

8425. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think it is cheaper to you? I do not know. I have done a good deal of both. Some men are large eaters, and it takes more than 10s. a week to keep them, and others, again, are small eaters.

8426. *By the Chairman:* It is more a matter of domestic arrangement? Yes, I think so.

8427. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you representing the Farmers' Association to-day? No.

8428. *By the Chairman:* We are seeking some way of inducing men to come here and settle so that their labour might be available for the canegrowers; can you suggest anything that would induce men to come? If some other form of cultivation could be started here in conjunction with the sugar-cane that would not require to be worked in the same season, it would be all right.

8429. *By Mr. Paget:* For instance, sisal hemp? Yes, something of that sort might be grown in the off season. I do not know what time it is harvested.

8430. *By the Chairman:* Would it be any use trying to settle men on the land permanently to do a little on their own land in the slack season? Yes, provided the holdings were not too large.

8431. What areas would you recommend? I should say 60 or 70 acres. Many farmers started on a 50-acre block with practically no capital, and that was as much as they could manage.

8432. *By Mr. Paget:* Did they go out and work for wages, and gradually improve their holdings? Yes, they were thrifty men.

8433. *By the Chairman:* Are any of those men farmers in this district now? Yes.

8434. Is their position improved? Decidedly.

8435. That is an object lesson, is it not? It is. There are many of them in this district.

8436. *By Mr. Paget:* What assistance did they get from the Government? I do not think they ever had any from the Government. Those I know obtained land from landlords here.

8437. *By the Chairman:* Had they any money of their own? Not much. They worked outside, and when they could get no work outside, they worked on their own land.

8438. How many instances of that kind do you know? Mr. Grosskreutz tells me that there are fifty such men in the district that he knows of. From what I can learn, there is likely to be a shortage of labour on account of the independence of the labourers. That makes it much more difficult for the farmer to get labour. They know you have no option. One man this week wanted 7s. a day and found. That is an indication that there are not so many men, or there would be others who would gladly do the work for a little less.

8439. *By Mr. Nielson:* You think that one instance is quite enough to lead you to form your opinion upon? I have another instance of a man who promised to come back to me this year. He wrote to me two months ago saying he was coming back; but he is not back yet, so that there must be some inducement for him to stay elsewhere. The majority of the men who come here are men who do not get on in Mackay. When good men come here and find that the crushing will only last half the time that it lasts in other places, they do not stay. One of the men who contracted for my cane last year said to me in February, "I believe the crushing is going to be very short here." I said that I did not know anything about it; and then he said, "A mate of mine has written to me from the Burdekin that they are going to crush for seven months, and I am going up there." We are so situated that we are likely to feel the shortage very severely.

H. C. Sterry. 8440. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you taken any steps towards trying to get labour from the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, where men are used to cane-cutting? I have not done so personally, although I have heard it discussed. There is something on foot with regard to inquiring in the southern States.

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8441. Two men arrived in Mackay last week to look at the crops, who represent thirty or forty men in one small locality on the Richmond River, so that there are people there who are desirous of obtaining work? Yes.

8442. *By the Chairman*: Did you ever employ kanakas? Yes, previous to the bounty.

8443. In any quantity? No.

8444. Did you work for anyone else who employed kanakas? No. I do not like kanakas, and that is why I was glad to register for the bonus. I do not like any labour signed on. I like to make my own price and deal with the men as I find them, and I have always been able to do it. I am paying higher wages this year than I ever did before, because the man I have suits me, and is a good worker.

8445. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you anything further you would like to say? To carry out the deportation of all the kanakas at the end of this year is rather too sudden.

8446. You say that as a man who does not employ kanakas, and does not wish to employ them? Yes, unless I could employ them free, and under no agreement. If I could employ them free, the same as any other man, I would have no objection to their colour. It is the signing on that I do not care about.

8447. *By the Chairman*: What have you to say about the deportation of the kanakas? I do not think the whole of them should be allowed to go away at once. It will create too big a shortage of labour, and will place the growers too much at the mercy of other men. A good number of them should be kept here as a sort of reserve.

8448. *By Mr. Paget*: I presume you are acquainted with the Commonwealth Act? Yes. I would suggest, however, that one-third should be sent away this year, one-third next year, and one-third the following year, which would give time to obtain the necessary labour.

8449. *By the Chairman*: You speak not in the interests of the country, but purely in the interests of the growers? Yes. I understood the object of this inquiry was to determine how the cane industry was to be continued.

8450. Yes; and how the kanakas might be deported without inhumanity as soon as possible after 31st December next? I have no experience of the islands.

8451. You consider the kanakas are useful as a sort of buffer against the white workers at the present time? Decidedly, as an emergency in case white labour cannot be found. Arrangements might be made by the Federal Government that, where growers have registered for the bounty and it is absolutely impossible to get their crop off with white labour and there is black labour available, they should be allowed to use it, and that their registration should date from the following January.

8452. *By Mr. Paget*: You fear that, if 5,000 or 6,000 men are taken out of the industry suddenly, you may not be able to get sufficient white labour? Yes.

8453. You have already stated that you have made no arrangements to try to supply the shortage which you anticipate? Quite so. I have made an arrangement with a man who has not turned up yet.

8454. Next year the position will be very much accentuated? That I quite believe.

8455. You have no suggestions to offer with regard to the deportation of the kanakas? No. I think the "boys" could best answer that themselves. My contact with them convinces me that many of them are quite capable of expressing an opinion on the subject.

WILLIAM JOHN TAYLOR, Cane Farmer, examined:

W. J. Taylor. 8456. *By the Chairman*: You are a canegrower? Yes; since the start of the Proserpine.

8457. You have had many years' experience as a banker? Yes, thirty years' experience.

8458. Do you employ white labour? Yes, for ordinary work.

8459. Are you registered for the bonus? This is the first year I have been registered.

8460. What are you paying for white labour? 22s 6d a week and found for permanent hands, and for contract work I am paying 30s a week and find themselves.

8461. Are there any unemployed about the district? I do not know that there are any. I have been away for a holiday, and am only home three weeks.

8462. We are told that there are fifty idle men about the place? I have not seen them. There are a few men about the town.

8463. You live only 2 or 3 miles from the town? Two and a-half miles.

8464. You have not seen fifty idle men knocking about? Who says there are fifty idle men knocking about?

8465. Two men say they have seen them? Then they know more about it than I do.

8466. Have you formed any opinion as to what will be the condition of things as regards labour next season? Up to the present season I have always used coloured labour, and I have had no trouble; but this season I have made inquiries, and there appears to be a likelihood of a great scarcity. With reference to men from the West, they prefer to work in that portion of the State. My ordinary work is done by white labour.

8467. Have you any suggestions to make with regard to deporting such a large number of Pacific Islanders? I think it will be most inhumane to send away men who are working for themselves. Adjoining me there is a man who has been in Queensland for thirty years. He has been twelve years on the Proserpine; he has a wife and family, and a small plantation. I have three kanakas on my own place to whom I let the land. They have cleared it and planted cane. I think it would be shameful to force those men to leave.

8468. *By Mr. Paget*: How long is it since you leased that land to them? Six months.

8469. *By the Chairman*: Are the terms of the lease just a royalty? Yes; just a royalty.

8470. No definite period? Yes; I let it to them for five years.

8471. *By Mr. Paget*: Are they exempt islanders? One of them is a man who was born here, and his father has been here for thirty years.

8472. *By the Chairman*: Then he is a British subject if he was born here? He is a kanaka.

8473. Are the others all ticket "boys"? Yes; they are all ticket "boys."

8475. Do you know anything about the conditions that obtain in the islands? I asked one "boy" if he would like to go back and he said, "No; me no want to go back. They take me by force."

8476. *By Mr. Paget*: How long have those islanders been in this State? Fifteen years.

8477. *By the Chairman*: What do you think about this question of settling people on comparatively small areas of land? I think it is the only solution of the labour problem. I think that no other solution is possible. W. J. Taylor.
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8478. How many years have you lived up here? Twelve years. I think these men could make a living on 30 or 40 acres of land, and they could group themselves for cutting purposes.

8479. *By Mr. Paget*: But what about the labour you require to cut the cane? We must form ourselves into groups. I must employ labour at any cost to fulfil my contract. I do my own work, but I would not like to go out cutting cane, as I am afraid I would not give satisfaction.

8480. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else with which you can help us? No. I did not come here with the intention of giving evidence at all.

8481. You think that the only solution of the difficulty is the settling of these men on small areas of land? I am firmly convinced of that.

8482. Have you noticed any instances of people getting on in the same way? Plenty of farmers have done well since they came here. I have not done well myself; but many things prevented that. I know many men who started with comparatively nothing who have done well.

Mr. Grosskreutz: I am one of them.

Another farmer: And I am another.

JOHN HINDMARSH, Manager of the Proserpine Central Mill, examined:

8483. How long have you been here? Six weeks.

8484. You have had many years' experience? Yes. J.
Hindmarsh.
28 April, 1906.

8485. Have you had any occasion to inquire into the labour market here lately? Yes.

8486. Two men here say that there are fifty men idle about here—can you give us your idea of what you think? There are not many men out of work that really want work.

8487. *By Mr. Paget*: How many do you think there are? I never went to the trouble of counting them up. I do not suppose there are over twenty, from what I see about.

8488. *By the Chairman*: You have not been here long enough to form an opinion about the class of men here? Those in our employ seem to be a desirable class of men, so far as I can see, and I judge from that that the labour about here, with a few exceptions, is about the same. I have no fault to find with those we have employed.

8489. You have had many years' experience amongst cane? Over thirty years.

8490. You know the position that confronts the State at the present time—that there are 6,000 liable to be deported, and that their places have to be filled with white labour—I presume—Have you formed any idea as to whether there are likely to be enough men to fill up their places? Last year we had applications from 300 men.

8491. Where was that? At Gin Gin. I engaged about 100, and the others went away.

8492. Were they likely to be Western men, or coastal men? I cannot say.

8493. *By Mr. Paget*: Gin Gin is comparatively near to Brisbane? Yes; 30 miles from Bundaberg.

8494. Have you had much to do with employing kanakas? No.

8495. Would you care to offer any opinion to us on the question of deportation? I have had nothing to do with kanakas, and I know nothing about them. I never engaged a kanaka in my life.

8496. It has been suggested that the settlement of men on comparatively small areas would have the effect of keeping the labour in the district that would be available in the crushing season? That is a good idea.

8497. Is it a thing that is likely to work out? Yes, provided that the men who are settled on the land could have some means of earning a livelihood while the cane is growing in the off season.

8498. Would a man with only a small sum of money have an opportunity of getting on? Yes.

8499. One gentleman said that fifty men started in the same way here and are now comfortable? Yes, and similar conditions prevail in other places.

8500. And they got on all right? Yes.

8501. And it would be of advantage to the district to have men like that about? Yes, undoubtedly.

8502. Is there anything about this locality, such as the climate, that would militate against such a scheme? Not so far as I can see.

8503. What about the women and children? They all look healthy.

8504. Can you tell us the number of farmers supplying cane to the mill? Something like 197.

8505. Can you tell us how many of these are coloured men—that is, the number of kanakas and other aliens? I think we have about eight kanakas supplying cane. Last year we had six Japanese, and I daresay there will be about double that number this year.

8506. *By the Chairman*: Are there any Chinese? Yes; two Chinese.

8507. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you tell us whether there are any large number of kanakas who are at present leasing land for the purpose of cane-growing entering into engagements this year? These eight men.

8508. Are you aware of the conditions under which these men hold their leases? All I know is that they pay a royalty. I never saw their leases.

8509. How do you know that they pay a royalty? The royalty is deducted for the landlord.

8510. What is the royalty? About 1s. per ton.

8511. Can you tell me whether the percentage of coloured growers has increased or decreased since 1902? I only came here a few weeks ago, but the secretary informs me that in 1902 there was only one alien delivering cane to the mill, in 1903 there were seventeen, and this year there are twenty-two aliens delivering cane to the mill.

8512. Is the area under cane for the mill increasing or decreasing? It is increasing.

8513. To any very great extent? Yes. It has increased by about 300 acres this year.

8514. Will there be 300 acres more to crush this year? There is that much under cane. I do not know about the crushing.

8515. Does the mill company do any cutting and loading for the farmers? They do in some cases.

8516. Is it the intention of the company to cut and load for the farmers? Not to harvest the crop.

8517. You have nothing to do with the supply of labour except for your own wants? That is all.

- J. Hindmarsh. 8518. How many men will you want? About 100.
 8519. There are no kanakas employed by the mill? No.
 8520. Or any other coloured men? No.
 26 April, 1906. 8521. *By the Chairman:* Have you any coloured men employed in cutting firewood for the mill under contract? No. It is all being done by white men. At least, white men have taken the contracts.
 8522. *By Mr. Nielson:* Could you venture an opinion as to how this climate compares with the climate of Gin Gin for this time of the year? I think it is cooler here than at Gin Gin. It was cooler when I came here than when I left Gin Gin a week before. I do not think the climate can be very bad. Of course, if people get moist, they suffer from the heat, but if they keep cool they are all right.

LUDWIG JENSEN BREUSCH, Cane Farmer, Woongarra Scrub, Bundaberg, examined:

- L. J. Breusch. 8523. *By the Chairman:* You are a cane farmer in the Woongarra Scrub, Bundaberg, at present visiting this district? Yes.
 26 April, 1906. 8524. On what point do you desire to give evidence? Chiefly to emphasise what has already been said with reference to settling caneworkers on the land. There are men in the district I come from who are anxious to obtain a small plot. It may be said that there are plenty Crown lands offering, but they are away in the bush, and mostly unsuitable.
 8525. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think that if suitable land was thrown open for selection in this district men would leave Bundaberg to come and select it? I shall certainly advise them to do so, for down in our locality there is none to be had. There is a little in my neighbourhood that is suitable, and which ought to be subdivided.
 8526. That is a reserve? Yes. It would make room for a dozen or more.
 8527. *By Mr. Paget:* In what areas? From 30 acres upwards, according to the quality of the land, but the area should not exceed 80 acres.
 8528. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think a small farm of good land is better than a large area of inferior land? We know for a fact that men have had to give up 160 acres in the bush because they could not make a living there.
 8529. The most successful farmers in the Woongarra Scrub have all small areas, have they not? Yes. Of course that is exceptionally rich land.
 8530. *By Mr. Paget:* And very easily cultivated? Yes; and it has easy access to a seaport, and everything in its favour. I would like to see these settlements of small holdings in the country. It would be greatly to the advantage of families instead of their being brought up in the towns where they have nothing to do after school hours. On a small farm there is always something for them to do, however small they may be.
 8531. They can employ their spare time healthfully and profitably? Yes. Again, in such settlements there would be a demand for a school right away; whereas, when the people are scattered over the country they cannot get a school. One reason why people object to going into the country is because the children get no schooling, and another is that, if the husbands go away to work, the wives are isolated. In small settlements, on the other hand, there would be no isolation, as they would all live in a cluster. The bonus has been granted for six years after this, and, as that gives the grower who employs white labour an advantage over the employer of coloured labour, it would be reasonable to allow the black labour difficult to fizzle out of itself.
 8532. You think it would be better to allow the kanakas to stay here indefinitely? Yes.
 8533. But how can they stay here if they are not allowed to work for their living after this year? I expect the Legislature will provide for that. From my district islanders are going home at a rapid rate. As soon as a ship is available, she fills, and in the course of four or five years there would be a very small number here. But, supposing there were 2,000 left after a time, they would only be like a drop in the bucket compared with the white population of Australia. They do not marry the whites to any extent, and there are none of their own females here. Consequently, in the course of twenty years, there would be no more islanders left.

EDWARD WILLIAM MACKENZIE, Baker, examined:

- E. W. Mackenzie. 8534. *By the Chairman:* Where do you reside? On Proserpine.
 26 April, 1906. 8535. I believe you have a good many demands on you from persons who are unable to pay you? There was a statement made to-day that there were about fifty unemployed here, and I just came to say that there are fully fifty unemployed here, if not more.
 8536. How do you know? I have been dealing with them, and they have been coming to me to get bread.
 8537. How do you know about the number? I am sure there are over fifty if there are any. There are odd ones who get a day's work now and again, but taking them altogether there are fully fifty of them.
 8538. I suppose you have only their word for it that they are unemployed? I know it.
 8539. You know they are walking about doing nothing? Yes.
 8540. Are you able to say that these men cannot get work if they want it? I do not see that the work is available.
 8541. Men will not get work walking about the street, you know? There may be some who do not want work, as there are a certain percentage of them everywhere. They do not all walk about the streets. There will be work for them eventually, but there is no work for them at the present time. I was just asked to come along and confirm what the witness said about there being fifty unemployed here.
 8542. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know most of these men individually? Yes, the bulk of them.
 8543. Are they men who have previously worked in this district? Yes; they all have, with a few exceptions.
 8544. Are they sober working men? Yes; the bulk of them are, but some get on the tear when they get a chance.
 8545. The bulk are good men while their jobs last? Yes.

ALEXANDER PERKINS, Farmer and Butcher, examined :

8546. *By the Chairman:* You have come here to give evidence about the unemployed? I came here to assist you. A. Perkins.

8546a. Tell us what you have got to say? I have harvested three crops. The first crop was in 1903. I got 213 tons, or an average of 14 tons to the acre. 26 April, 1906.

8547. Yes? The labour in that case was started with a good sound man at 25s. a week and found. This is the first case I want you to take notice of, because the question of finding rations created a big discussion this afternoon. This man lasted three weeks. His food was the cause of complaint. He said he never worked with such tucker in all his life. Well, that man shared the dishes from my own table.

8548. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you a married man? No, sir.

8549. Who did the cooking? My sister. She cooked for this man and myself, and as there were only three of us you can understand that the one dish would do for both tables. That man said the tucker was not good enough, and he never worked for such tucker in his life.

8550. *By Mr. Nielson:* Did he explain what he wanted? No; and he could not tell me where it was deficient.

8551. Perhaps he had a bad liver? He was a bit of a political man. That is how it is we find it compulsory to give them so much a week, and let them find themselves. I let him the balance of the work on contract for 3s. 9d. per ton.

8552. *By Mr. Paget:* What was it costing you per ton by day wages? He was a good cutter, and could easily cut 2 tons a day. On his contract he made 10s. a day and he tuckered himself. He cooked all his dinner in a bit of a billycan, and he was satisfied.

8553. *By Mr. Nielson:* That is what he preferred? Yes. The average cost of cutting the crop turned out at 3s. 9d. per ton. In 1904 I cut 112 tons on day wages, and gave 30s. a week and rations. The man I had working for me carried that through, and was very well satisfied. That man is a local settler now. He has taken up Crown land and become a settler. The crop averaged 13. 6d. per ton, with an average of 13 tons to the acre. I might say that it was a very poor crop, and the man earned his money well. In 1905 I cut 161 tons. I had some good plant cane, but bad ratoons. I paid day wages and contract both. I paid 30s. a week for a man, and 25s. a week for a boy and found him. The contract the man took at 3s. 3d. That was for the plant cane. On the contract he did not make much more than bare wages, so I added another 3d. to it, and gave him 3s. 6d. The average cost of the crop was 3s. 8d. right through.

8554. *By Mr. Paget:* Was this cane trashed? No; it was all untrashed, and went 14 tons to the acre. This year I have 18½ acres, estimated to yield 21 tons to the acre. I have three offers to cut it, and I reckon it will cost me 3s. 5d.

8555. Is that to cut and load? I have to cart it and help load. The man has to stop cutting to help load. I will get a wagon this year to facilitate their movements.

8556. *By the Chairman:* We are much obliged to you for your figures; they are very useful—Have you anything more to say? As regards the labour supply, I think it will be deficient.

8557. *By Mr. Paget:* What wages are you paying now for cultivation? £1 a week and found. The man in charge of my farm gets £1 a week, and a bonus per ton of cane, so that his wages should never be less than 35s. a week, and he can go up to £2 or £2 10s. if he likes. I consider the supply of labour that is available both deficient and indifferent, because of its unreliability and the isolation of the district. It is unreliable because the men do not seem to have the will power to resist temptation when they come to town. It is not that they indulge in premeditated debauches. They do not turn up to work, and their places must be filled, because the mill must be kept running, and that causes loss. The isolation of the district keeps a good many men away, on account of there being no other work for them to turn to during the slack season. I do not consider it practicable to have settlement in this district, unless you can guarantee some monetary assistance. Instances have been given of farmers taking up small areas. They spend any money they get on those holdings, at the expense of the tradespeople, and that considerably hampers trade. We have had to stand to their credit, otherwise they would have been starved out.

8558. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have they not paid you since? No, accounts are still standing; and, if this scheme of settlement is adopted, it had better be understood from the very start that the tradespeople will combine, as they cannot stand out of their money for two or three years. The men do not earn sufficient in the busy season to keep themselves for six or seven months and pay taxes to the country as well. If people are going to be induced to settle in this manner, it would be as well to provide them with some means, either through the Agricultural Bank or in some other way, as the cost of living is much higher here than in the South.

8559. *By the Chairman:* Are food supplies dearer than in the South? Yes. The shipping charges are simply atrocious. We pointed that out to the Premier when he was here, and it had a great deal to do with the increase of 1s. a ton for cane, as it showed him that the farmers could not live with the 13s. a ton he was paying for cane.

8560. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you any idea what difference there is between the cost of living here and in the Bundaberg district? I should imagine it would come to 2d. or 3d. in the 1s.

8561. As high as 25 per cent.? Yes.

8562. What is the average price of beef here? It has been as high as 6d. a lb., but it is down to 4d. now.

8563. What is the price of bread? 4d. for a 2-lb. loaf, but bread is hardly a fair criterion, as nearly every farmer makes his own bread. When I was in the mill, I could land my flour for nearly 7s. a bag less than the storekeepers could sell it to me for. Another difficulty in connection with this settlement business is, that every man will require some plant. They go out with a paltry few pounds, and, if they have to purchase a plant, they will have absolutely no money to start with.

8564. *By Mr. Paget:* Every man who wants to grow an acre or two of garden truck, does not want a team of three horses, a plough, and a harrow—on a crab land all he wants is a few tools, a billhook, a mattock, and an axe? What is he going to grow—cane?

8565. Maize; but he can grow cane too, with those implements? And then he has eighteen months to wait, and as soon as he gets a crop, he is no longer a labourer.

- A. Perkins. 8566. I am talking about his growing crops like sweet potatoes, pumpkins, and maize, while he is not engaged at other work? There is no market for them.
- 26 April, 1906. 8567. *By the Chairman:* But for his own consumption? I know the difficulty some farmers have had in getting rid of their maize.
8568. I am not talking of their getting rid of it—The assumption is that they will plant some potatoes and other things in their spare time, and their wives and children will look after them while the men are away at work, and thus they will keep down their flour bill? But are you going to get married men to go out to such places?
8569. Where did all the married men who built up Australia come from—they had no Government to run to, or Agricultural Bank, either? In my opinion it is impracticable.
8570. *By Mr. Nielson:* I suppose it is also your opinion that giving a man 40 acres of good land that would grow cane would not be of any use? I gather from the tenor of the evidence this afternoon that the idea is to preserve the labour supply for the district. Well, the moment you give a man 40 acres on which to grow cane, he is no longer on the labour market.
8571. My object is simply to get the cane grown, and whether it is grown by the man himself or by a hired servant does not matter—I would prefer to see men settled on 20-acre blocks and growing it themselves? I wish to understand whether what you want is a labour supply for the district or to settle people on the land.
8572. *By the Chairman:* You do not want anyone to become anything but what he is now? I do not want a scheme which would deprive the industry of its labour supply. We have had applications for land for settlement from the south, and the men who are coming have some small amount of capital. They may battle along.
8573. But they will be in competition with you for the labour that is available, and that will increase your difficulties? You are going to give us a false labour supply for two years and then take it away.
8574. *By Mr. Nielson:* You say that scheme will not work? Not the 10-acre scheme which has been suggested.
8575. Or a 30 or 40 acre? No; not to keep up the labour supply.
8576. Have you any other scheme? I think the scheme of giving certificates and a higher standard of wages would be better—that is, a discharge note.
8578. Do you mean that the present wages are not high enough? They are high enough for the labour we have got.
8579. Suppose we admit that the labour is not good enough, will the rate you pay attract a better class? The rates vary so much. If you get a good man you will give him a bit more, but you are not going to advertise what you are going to give.
8580. Are you a member of the Farmers' Association? No.
8581. It is a pity you were not there to get them to do that—I can only read what it says there? I have not read it then.
8582. A contractor, from all points of view, wants to know how much he is going to make, so how much do you think a man ought to be able to make? That is a very hard question to answer.
8583. That is a question a man asks himself before he takes work? I think every man is satisfied with £1 a week and his keep for common labouring work.
8584. *By the Chairman:* Do you think that would be sufficient to attract men up from New South Wales to live in this climate? Yes, as a labourer, and if he likes to become a farmer after two or three years he can do so. I object to him being upon the land and leaving him there with nothing to go upon.
8585. *By Mr. Nielson:* Would you advocate that he should get assistance? Yes. Legislate for it.
8586. Have you any idea what the farmers in this district can afford to pay for harvesting and field work, as that is one of the most important points? At the present rates we cannot afford to pay much more.
8587. *By Mr. Paget:* What rates? The price paid by the mill. My arrangements with my men slide according to the arrangements of the mill. If the mill pays me more, then my men get more; and if the mill pays me less, then my men go down with me.
8588. *By the Chairman:* Would not a risk like that act as a deterrent? I take it that the southern States are getting crowded out and you want some place to put their unemployed.
8589. You think you have unemployed here now? There are a good few about.
8590. Mr. Mackenzie says there are fifty unemployed men here? I think there would be fifty here.
8591. Can you suggest some scheme to give them employment? I can, but I think it will sound ridiculous. Let the mill pay more for the cane and the farmers will lay out more and in that way the mill will get it back again.
8592. *By Mr. Nielson:* Can you suggest how the mill can get more for its sugar? The mill made a profit of £10,000 last year.
8593. *By the Chairman:* But the mill represents an enormous capital; was that profit after paying interest? I do not know.
8594. There is interest to be paid on that capital? Mr. Kidston did not mention that to the deputation. If the farmers can aid more to their earnings they will be able to employ more labour.
8595. Yet you say the scheme is impracticable? Not to provide labour.
8596. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you think there will be sufficient men unemployed, or that there will be an available supply for your labour after next year? I do not think there will be.
8597. Have you any knowledge of the labour conditions of the States? I had charge of the mill for seven years.
8598. You were secretary of the mill here for seven years? Yes; and the labour in the mill was always the most anxious problem for the manager.
8599. *By Mr. Nielson:* I thought you told us a while ago that the South was getting crowded out? That has nothing to do with the question of being anxious. I said, presuming that the southern States were crowded out.
8600. No; you took it for granted? Well, I think I can reasonably take it for granted. After what you read in the papers you can naturally infer that there is unemployed labour to be disposed of. That was my inference here.

Mr. Nielson: And the next moment you say you do not think there will be enough labour here next year? A. Perkins.

8601. *By Mr. Paget*: But what about the 6,000 kanakas leaving here? I did not say that there were 6,000 unemployed down South. There are 6,000 men going away, and there will be keen competition, and men with a little capital will not come here to do tropical work. 26 April, 1906.

8602. The question we require to get information on is whether there will be sufficient labour available to carry on this industry, as if there is not sufficient labour the crop has to rot? My opinion is that the Northern districts will be crippled, although the Southern districts may survive.

8603. *By Mr. Nielson*: But they complain that you are enticing all the men away from their districts? I do not know about their complaints, as I have enough of my own.

8604. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you wish to say? No; only to express my pleasure at meeting you and thanking you for your courtesy in listening to me.

HARRY WINTER, Labourer, examined:

8605. *By the Chairman*: I understand that at present you are unemployed? Yes. H. Winter.

8606. Where did you work last? I worked here for two seasons.

8607. When did you do any work last? The first week in February. 26 April, 1906.

8608. Where? On the Peak Downs, near Clermont.

8609. Why did you leave that employment? I was water drawing when the rain came, and I was knocked off.

8610. And you came over here? Yes; I have been here for two seasons, and this will be my third season.

8611. Have you done any work since you came over here? No; I only arrived here yesterday. I am over two months out of work.

8612. Did you walk across? Yes; part of the way.

8613. Which part did you not walk? From Mackay to here. I got a ride part of the way.

8614. Which way did you come? I came from Rockhampton on the 1st of April.

8615. How did you get to Rockhampton? I walked from Peak Downs to Rockhampton.

8616. You did not get a pass? There is no possibility of getting a pass to Rockhampton, though I could get a pass away from there—there are too many unemployed in Rockhampton.

8617. Did you look for work on the way? No.

8618. You have not got any since? No.

8619. You have not been all through the district yet? I have not had time.

8620. Have you got a list of the men who are unemployed? I tried very hard, but it is impossible. They have gone away from here. Still you have seen the men here.

8621. I have seen a number of men, but the sergeant of police tells me that he knows one or two of the men who were here this afternoon are actually in work, while others are men who will not work, and that is why I want you to be explicit? I know a good many of the men, and the majority seem to be hardworking men.

8622. There were twenty-three here this afternoon. How many of them did you know? I know six or seven of them.

8623. What are the names of those men? There is one chap named Smith, and there are others whom I know by sight, but I do not know their surnames.

8624. You believe that some of them are hard-working men? The majority of them are.

8625. They are not hard up? The majority of them are.

8626. How is it they have not gone to the sergeant for rations then? If they go for rations, it is on the distinct understanding that they are going away.

8627. If they persist in waiting until the work comes to them they can hardly claim that that is a grievance? The business people know a good few of them, and they give the men what they require.

8628. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many men left for the Peak Downs after the last crushing season? I could not tell you.

8629. How many do you think? Some left for the North, some went to Mackay, and some went to the Peak Downs.

8630. Did you meet many men on the Peak Downs who were here last crushing season? I met a good few. I met others in Rockhampton who would be back only they know that it has been a very poor slack season here, and so they will not be back until a week or two before the crushing.

8631. Do the men outside know there is no work here just now? Yes; I was told in Mackay.

8632. Is that the reason why men are not coming in any numbers just now? I think that is one of the principal reasons. Last year £8,000 was spent on the tramline and other works, and there is nothing being spent this year.

8633. Was it because of the tramline being built and the other work you speak of, that so many men came to the district last year? I think that was the principal reason.

8634. Was there more woodcutting last year? I think there was.

8635. And sleeper-cutting? Yes. There is hardly any sleeper-cutting this year.

8636. *By Mr. Paget*: How is it that this has been such a poor slack season—is it that the farmers are not doing the usual amount of planting this year? It does not seem like it. I think it is on account of the mill not doing much work.

8637. You think the farmers are doing the same amount of work? Not quite.

8638. They are not employing quite the number of men they have done in previous slack seasons? I do not think they have been employing as many this season as last year.

8639. The great reason, then, for this shortage of work is that very much less work is being done by the mill? Yes.

8640. *By the Chairman*: Have you generally worked in the Western country? No; I have been in the Western country and the Darling Downs, but I prefer the sugar country. I heard a farmer remark this afternoon that his men prefer 30s. a week and find themselves to £1 a week and found. Well, I have never been asked which I preferred. Our wages were 30s. a week and find ourselves, and we had to walk in 3 miles on Saturday night for our groceries and meat. We had to get up before daylight to cook our breakfast, and it was nearly 9 o'clock before we had finished our dinner. I consider the man who prefers 30s. a week and find himself to £1 a week and found is an idiot, and the majority of the men I spoke to to-day are of the same opinion.

THOMAS BELLMAN, Unemployed Labourer, examined:

- T. Bellman. 8641. *By the Chairman:* You are an unemployed labourer? Yes.
 8642. Where were you working last? 15 miles out.
 26 April, 1906. 8643. When was that? Two days ago.
 8644. What money did you draw when you left? I drew £2 4s. for three weeks' work at 30s. a week, and paid 11s. a week for tucker; wet weather stopped.
 8645. Then you are not actually in want? No.
 8646. What is it you want to say? I come from the Western country, and I had a fair idea of farming before I went West. I heard it stated this afternoon by farmers that they cannot get men in the sugar districts. Well, I can say, in answer to that, that men will not stop because of the way they are treated. £1 a week and food is a good wage to any working man, and I do not know many who would not accept it; but the farmer prefers to give a man 30s. a week and find himself. At one place where I worked there was no shelter provided for the men, and as a rule Western men do not carry tents, as the stages are too long for them to carry the burden. We all came in here during the drought, and we only had a piece of calico that the farmer supplied us with. The work was planting, and it was very hard. I had to carry plants up a hill which must have had a grade of 1 in 2, and I did not consider I was fairly paid.
 8647. *By Mr. Paget:* It was evidently hilly scrub? Yes; that is one of the disadvantages of hilly country. Then the victuals were such that a man could not work on them. I saw a book which contained the names of the men who worked on another piece of that land, and to plant about 30 or 40 acres as many as thirty men passed through the gang.
 8648. *By Mr. Nielson:* Were you here last season? No.
 8649. When did you first come to the district? About four weeks ago.
 8650. And you have done three weeks' work? Yes.
 8651. You are now out of work? Yes.
 8652. Have you any prospect of getting work? Not that I can see.
 8653. Have you had time to look round yet? The two days I have been in the weather has been very broken; but I do not intend staying at the Proserpine. I really think there will be a great shortage of men here on account of the way in which the last association of farmers has brought itself together. They simply formed their association, and did not seem to reckon that the working men were at the other end of the stick at all. I have seen men working in the Southern districts for 15s. a week who have been well content. I have my victuals, but, unless I get good victuals, I will not stop anywhere.
 8654. *By the Chairman:* You think that a man should not only get good wages but good food as well? Yes.
 8655. You would rather have 20s. and food than 30s. a week and find yourself? Yes, I would.

ALFRED SMITH, Labourer, examined.

- A. Smith. 8656. *By the Chairman:* You are one of the unemployed? Yes.
 8657. What are you doing now? Travelling about tinsmithing.
 26 April, 1906. 8658. You do not call yourself one of the unemployed? No. I was on the canefields for many years.
 8659. What do you think is a fair wage? If you earned 12s. a day for twelve hours it would not be too much. On the mountains it is worth more.
 8660. Do you think the industry will pay more? If the farmers get more per ton of cane they can afford to pay more.
 8661. And if the men who sell the sugar get more for the sugar they can also afford to pay more? Yes, they can.
 8662. Have you travelled round this district? I have.
 8663. Are there many men out of work? There are.
 8664. It is stated that there are fifty here? I believe if they were mustered up they would number fifty.
 8665. Is there any chance of these men getting work of any kind now? I do not think so.
 8666. *By Mr. Paget:* Is most of the wood-chopping at the mill finished? I could not tell you that. I may mention that I have met a lot of men, and five out of every eight were going towards the sugar districts.

GEORGE YASSARI, Kanaka, Native of Queensland, examined:

- G. Yassari. 8667. *By the Chairman:* What island do you belong to? I am a native of Glen Isla, Proserpine.
 8668. You come here to speak on behalf of the "boys"? Yes.
 26 April, 1906. 8669. What is your father's name? Billy Yassari.
 8670. What island does your father come from? Malicolo.
 8671. And your mother? She came from New Ireland.
 8672. *By Mr. Nielson:* Has your father got a ticket? Yes; and my mother, too.
 8673. *By the Chairman:* You are a British subject, and you are all right; and as your father and mother have got tickets, they are all right, too? Yes.
 8674. What do you want to say to us? I represent all the coloured labour on the Proserpine.
 8675. *By Mr. Paget:* You mean the kanakas? Yes.
 8676. *By the Chairman:* Do they want to go home? No, sir; they want to stay. They want to have a place of their own.
 8677. About thirteen of them have got farms on lease? Yes.
 8678. And none of them want to go home? None of them.
 8679. Where do they want to get land? They want to try to get Seaforth if they can.
 8680. *By Mr. Nielson:* I suppose they think the Government will be glad to get rid of it? We would like to have it.
 8681. *By Mr. Paget:* You do not want 6,000 acres? No.
 8682. *By the Chairman:* You want the Government to let you have Seaforth, so that you can live there and make farms? Yes.
 8683. Did you see in the papers that the kanakas at North Rockhampton want a big tract of land set apart for them as a reserve—that is, the "boys" who have got tickets? No; I did not read that.
 8684. Do you read the newspapers? Sometimes.

8685. Your idea is that the Government should set aside a piece of land for you? Yes; we could then work for ourselves, and we would not be any trouble to the white labour. G. Yassari.
8686. Are any of you missionary men? There are a lot of Christian "boys" here, but there is no school here. 26 April, 1906.
8687. *By Mr. Paget:* The "boys" do not want to grow cane here? These "boys" are on royalty, and after a few years are over they will have to go out. They think it would be better to have land of their own, where they could grow cane and supply it to the mill it is nearest to.
8688. *By the Chairman:* The islanders want to stop here until their leases are over and then go on to land of their own? Yes.
8689. *By Mr. Paget:* Do the "boys" know that there is not a mill near Seaforth? There is the Farleigh mill. It is only 14 or 15 miles away.
8690. You think the Government should give this land to the "boys," and they would clear it themselves? Yes.

(Proserpine.)

FRIDAY, 27 APRIL, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) |

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

ROBERT BLAIR, Storekeeper, examined:

8691. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A storekeeper. R. Blair.
8692. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you represent the Chamber of Commerce? No. The Chamber of Commerce was not notified of your visit, and we did not want to presume, but some of the members suggested to me that the Chamber might be represented here, so that it may be taken for granted that I represent the Chamber, though not officially. 27 April, 1906.
8693. *By the Chairman:* How long have you resided at the Proserpine? Six and a-half years. I do not think I need say much about kanakas here, as we are not likely to be affected by their going away, and have got on for about two years without them. The only way in which their deportation may affect us is if places like the Mulgrave and Mossman, where they are largely employed, offer greater inducements for white men, and we may be left with less labour than we have now.
8694. *By Mr. Paget:* Does it not naturally follow that, if a large number of men go out of an industry at a given date, there must be greater competition for the labour that is left? That is so. There may be competition if you are going to send away thousands of men at one time. I had dealings with hundreds of the kanakas four or five years ago, and the majority of them seem to have got hold of very few of the virtues of the whites and of a good many of their vices, and I do not think they are a desirable class. I think the country will be well rid of them. On the other hand, there are some settled here who are married and whose children are being taught in the school, and it would be a great hardship if they were not humanely legislated for. From my dealings with them I can say that they are very exemplary and law-abiding citizens.
8695. In what way do you think they should be treated humanely? A very good suggestion was made here to-night—that is that they should be settled at Seaforth. The only thing would be to pass a law preventing them going into the towns in large numbers. They should be given a place of their own where they could work if they wished to, and where they would not be a menace to the white people.
8696. Do I understand that you are opposed to the deportation of those islanders who have been settled here for many years? Seeing that their children are being educated at our schools, there would be something radically wrong in sending them amongst uncivilised races.
8697. You think the most humane way of dealing with them would be to allow them to live out their lives here if they desired to? Yes, or find some island apart from the others, and put them there.
8698. Unfortunately, the other islands belong to other islanders? No doubt that is where the difficulty would crop up; but, if they were kept in a place in Queensland, or elsewhere in Australia, and were willing to be law-abiding, in the same way that they are here, I see no reason why they should not be allowed to remain.
8699. What inducements would you suggest to attract white labour? The white labour we have at present is fairly reliable as a whole, though you will find a few that are unreliable.
8700. What percentage is there of men who really do not care about constant work? I think there are fully 10 per cent. who are unreliable through drink. The thing is to find ways and means of keeping the reliable men here during the slack season. I have been talking to these men from time to time, and they tell me that the food they receive from the farmers, and the wages paid, compare very favourably with those received in any other place they have been in. They seem to be contented enough, and like the climate—we all think it is a good climate; but the great difficulty is to get work during the slack season. In thinking over this matter, there is one important feature that has struck me. Proserpine has many advantages that not many other places have. There is new land that can be opened up.
8701. At not too great a distance? It does not matter for a bit of distance. If the Government will extend the tramline, the distance will not be very material. I see no reason why these lands should not be opened up in areas of about 40 acres, the area being dependent upon the quality of the land. If it was rich scrub, 40 acres would be a fair thing; but there is plenty of it.
8702. *By the Chairman:* What would you do with 40 acres? The Government would have to assist the men to get on to those blocks.
8703. To what extent would they require assistance? It all depends. After a crushing some men might have a little bit of a cheque, and they would not require so much assistance, though most of them would require more or less help during the preliminary stages of occupancy, while they were felling the scrub, putting up a humpy, and a fence, and wire netting to keep out the wallabies. And when that was done these men could be utilised in helping to harvest the crop here, and be allowed to leave

- R. Blair. their little patches, and come to harvest the crop. There is no doubt that these men being settled on their little patches of land in that way—it need not be all sugar, but they can go in for mixed farming, and grow maize and potatoes for themselves—would be a good thing. These men would get on well themselves, and as they have mates in other parts of Australia, they would drop them a note, and let them know how they were getting along. They would say to those who were out of work elsewhere, "Come along to Prosperpine." There is no doubt that would be the result.
- 27 April, 1906. 8704. You have touched on the white labour question and the kanaka question; is there anything else that you would like to speak about? The grievance with the men has been that they have been stuck, right through the off season, for want of work. I am speaking of the reliable men. We anticipate having very much more cane this year, and we want the men to stop here.
8705. *By Mr. Paget:* But even with the best crushing you can get, the fact remains that there are more men wanted in the crushing season than out of it? Yes; here is another point: If the Government would only open up roads, it would be of some assistance. We have plenty of land here, but no roads to them. The Government could very well afford to put the unemployed on the work of making these roads, and add the cost of them on to the land. A man would be prepared to give more for a piece of land if there was a road to it.
8706. That is being done in the South now? It is not being done here.
8707. But it is done in the South? There is plenty of room for it here. I am pleased to hear that they are doing it in the South. If it were done here it would give the necessary employment during the slack season, and provide the labour required for the crushing season.
8708. *By the Chairman:* This suggestion of yours would only apply to men who had the reputation of being sober men while they are here? The same thing would apply to the casuals if better conditions prevailed.
8709. But you would not expect the Government to do these things unless the men earned a reputation for sobriety? Yes; that should be legislated for. It is a hardship on some of the men themselves. They take a contract, and after they have started some of their mates get on the drink, and the whole thing is left in the lurch. Something has to be done to overcome that. Then, again, with regard to other labour, we are told that the Mackay forest land is done so far as sugar is concerned.
8710. *By Mr. Paget:* But theorists put forward theories that do not work out in actual practice? If the thing were worked we would have farmers' sons here, and we could put them on to better work than harvesting. If a man were running a dairy and mixed farming, he could spare his sons better than if he were growing cane himself. There are some good men here, and better men would come by and by.

JOSEPH ANDERSON, Cane Farmer, examined:

- J. Anderson. 8711. *By the Chairman:* Have you anything to tell us about the sugar industry? I am the largest employer of labour here in the slack season.
- 27 April, 1906. 8712. What do you employ your men at? Preparing the land for cane and planting. In December last I employed sixteen men, and since then I have employed from six to ten men.
8713. Do you have any difficulty in getting a good class of men? My difficulty has been in getting steady men.
8714. Do you mean temperate men? I mean that we have to keep them on the job. They work for a while and then knock off, and they spell as long as their money lasts.
8715. They are intemperate men and spend their money in drink? Yes; I have only one man who has worked right through.
8716. *By Mr. Paget:* You cultivate a large area? Yes.

(Mossman.)

FRIDAY, 4 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.
MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

FREDERICK WILLIAM BARNARD, Cane Farmer and a Director of Mossman Central Sugar Mill Company, examined:

- F. W. Barnard. 8717. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer.
- 4 May, 1906. 8718. You are also a director of the Mossman Central Sugar Mill Company? Yes.
8719. What is the area of your farm? 480 acres.
8720. What area are you cutting? Last season I cut about 130 acres.
8721. *By Mr. Paget:* What is the total area under cultivation? About 170 acres, but some of it is out of cultivation now.
8722. *By the Chairman:* What amount of cane did you cut? Just on 1,900 tons.
8723. What class of labour did you employ? Contract Indian labour.
8724. What did you pay per ton? 2s. 6d. a ton for trashed cane, and 3s. for untrashed cane. On the hills I paid 6d. a ton extra. That was for cutting and loading on to a portable tramway and laying the rails.
8725. You are not registered? No.
8726. You are carrying on with the same class of labour? Yes, Indian and kanaka labour. The Indians cut the cane. They are paid 23s. 6d a week and they find themselves.
8727. What did you pay the kanakas? Lately we have been paying them 12s. a week and found, but I have paid them as much as 14s. a week and found, and 15s. has been paid in the district.
8728. Are there many Hindoos in the district? We had 125 Indians working for the company up to the end of last season—there may have been more than that in the district; and we had 204 kanakas at work for the company.

8729. *By Mr. Paget:* Were the South Sea Islanders indentured or re-engagement "boys"? All those employed by the mill have been re-engagement "boys," but some of the farmers have indentured "boys."

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8730. *By the Chairman:* How many years' experience have you had here? I have been cane-growing for twelve years, but it is twenty-four years since I came to the North.

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8731. Have you lived here all the time? No. I have been here for twelve years. I have just been away for four months for the first time in that period. Prior to that I was away for six years.

8732. Have you employed any white labour at all? I do all my ploughing and cane cultivation with white labour. Every man I have had said that he would not cut cane. The other work is easy in comparison in this climate.

8733. *By Mr. Paget:* What was the reason for the mill company employing 125 Hindoos and 204 kanakas last season? They were employed in cultivating and canecutting.

8734. That is for the farmers? Yes; the work is for the cane-growers, both shareholders and non-shareholders.

8735. Are the cane-growers changed the cost price? Practically they are. We do not make any profit out of them, all the profits being disbursed amongst the cane-growers.

8736. *By the Chairman:* Have you ever made any attempt to get white labour for canecutting and cultivating? Last year there was a private gang at work. The farmers were responsible for them, but the company supervised their work.

8737. Was that the first time white labour was so engaged? No; we have had them for four or five seasons past.

8738. Where did you get them from? They were men in the district, and we advertised in the South in different places. We have also had men from Townsville.

8739. What wages have you paid? Last season there was only one gang working, and they were paid 30s. a week and found, and they were provided with a cook. They cut 24.5 acres for a tonnage of 4,177 tons, which works out at 17 tons 1 cwt. per acre. There were 6,067 acres cut altogether for a yield of 80,768 tons, or an average of 13½ tons per acre. I believe the contractor lost money on his contract.

8740. Is the contractor here now? He is in the district, but I do not know whether he is here to-day.

8741. Are you doing anything, in anticipation of the coming season, to secure sufficient labour? The mill is. The secretary is away engaging men at the present time.

8742. You intend to use white gangs this year? About half the cane is to be cut by white labour, and half by coloured labour. We find it impossible to secure enough white labour, and last year we made contracts with a lot of Hindoos for two years.

8743. Have your secretary's efforts to secure suitable labour been successful? Yes. I believe a majority of the men he has engaged will be very suitable men.

8744. You are satisfied with the result of his efforts? I am not. We have no large centre close handy where we can get labour to replace men who fall out of the gangs. Some of the men may become ill. Then we are near a very large mining district, and if a rush should take place, a lot of the men would go away at once, and I for one would not blame them. The climate is not fit for a white man to continue working in the cane-fields year after year. More especially is it not fit for women and children. If they could get a change away occasionally, they might manage.

8745. Are a large percentage of the men married? The cane-growers are; but not a majority of the working men. A large number of the mill hands are married men.

8746. What is the rate of mortality in the district? I do not know, but it is not high.

8747. Is there a doctor resident at the Mossman? No. There is one at Port Douglas, and he comes out about three times a week. White men are quite capable of doing the mill work. We employed about 160 men on an average last season. Of course that is not laborious work.

8748. *By Mr. Paget:* And the men are working under cover? Yes. I have worked very hard myself—as hard as anybody in the district—but for the last two or three years I have not been able to stand it.

8749. *By the Chairman:* You understand that legislation requires that the kanakas shall be deported, and we shall be glad to have any ideas from you? My idea is to allow the kanakas to remain for a couple of years longer, and let them be gradually deported. That would be an advantage to us to help us to secure white labour.

8750. *By Mr. Paget:* Would you allow those who stopped here for a further two years to enter into agreements for that period? Certainly; but I would give the inspectors instructions to arrange the matter on a sliding scale so that they could gradually get rid of them.

8751. To whom would you give the preference? The farmers could make application for a certain number of men.

8752. But, speaking in the kanakas' interest, which would you give the preference to, as some will have agreements for longer periods than others? Some of the "boys" wish to go home now, and they could go first. Then those who do not wish to go home at all should be allowed to remain the longest.

8753. But presuming that all the kanakas wished to sign on for two years, would we not have the same difficulty that we have now—namely, that 5,000 or 6,000 of them would have to be dealt with suddenly? No; you would not have any difficulty if you made a hard-and-fast rule that a certain number must leave periodically. I contend, though, that this work is not fit for white men to work at continuously, especially in the Northern districts. It is not so bad in the South.

8754. *By the Chairman:* You have had twelve years of it? Yes, but I have been able to take it easy.

8755. You have not been away? Yes, I have just been away for four months, and I feel a lot better than I did.

8756. *By Mr. Nielson:* The people here look well, and so do the children? Do you think so? I do not think they look as well as the children in New South Wales and Victoria.

8757. *By the Chairman:* Is there a State school here? Yes.

8758. We will have an opportunity of seeing it? Yes. These children come of good stock, but I do not know what they will be like later on. I have been in Victoria recently, and my father lives there now. I have plenty of relations who live to a good old age, and one is eighty-five. They would never live to that age up here.

8759. Your opinion, on the whole, then, is that the white men can never do the canecutting up here? You might get a certain class of men to do it; the Italians, for instance.

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- 8760 Have you had experience of Italians? I believe they did very well.
8761. What reputation had they as colonists? They have been pretty good on the Mossman. Several of them have settled down and married here. Others can give you better ideas than I can about the Italians, as I live a short distance out of town. I would like to say something about this extra payment for the return fare of the kanakas when they are sent home. Are you inquiring into that?
- The Chairman:* That is a matter regarding which those interested should address the head of the department. We have nothing to do with it. It came up incidentally before the Commission, it is true.
8762. *By Mr. Paget:* For your information I might tell you that there is a test case being tried in Mackay? Yes, I know that as we are interested in it ourselves.
8763. *By the Chairman:* Is there any other subject upon which you would like to speak to us? Of course I contend that white men should do the ploughing. The actual harvesting and keeping it clean after the harvesting has all been done with coloured labour. Very little of the present crop has been kept clean with white labour. We were allowed to use the kanakas up till the 21st of January, and we finished crushing on the 21st November. We kept it clean by coloured labour up to that time.
8764. *By Mr. Nielson:* Trashing is being done by white labour in this district, as we saw it being done this morning? Yes. The Hindoos, kanakas, and Chinamen knock off for certain times in the day.
8765. *By the Chairman:* The Hindoos, Chinamen, and kanakas knock off at regular hours every day? They knock off occasionally, but not regularly.
8766. Could not the white men adapt themselves to the same conditions by working earlier in the day and later in the evening? They might do that.
8767. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know that in tropical countries they do not work in the middle of the day? But we have to keep the mill going here.
8768. Suppose you cut cane for ten hours a day, does it matter what time it is cut? We are obliged to knock the men off for three or four hours a day on account of the horses, because the horses cannot stand the climate.
8769. You know that in some cases men can work where horses will die? It is not fit for a man to be working if it makes the horses die.
8770. *By the Chairman:* The difficulty appears to be that the white men will not adapt themselves to the conditions of the climate? I consider it is not fit work for a white man to do at certain periods of the year.
8771. *By Mr. Paget:* You have not registered your fields yet? No, because we found it would be impossible for all of us to register, and we had certain areas let to Indians for two years, and I thought the other cane-growers should have the preference for registering.
8772. How many kanakas do you employ yourself? I am reduced to one to-day, but on the average I employ seven or eight kanakas.
8773. At the end of this year you will not have those seven or eight to work for you, as the Act stands at present? No.
8774. What labour do you intend to carry on your farm with at the end of this year? I have not gone into the matter yet. There will be a certain number of Hindoos here; but if the white men get on all right I will try them.
8775. *By Mr. Nielson:* You want to see how the other fellow gets on first? Yes; and I will give it a fair trial myself.
8776. *By Mr. Paget:* You are willing to give white labour a fair trial, without bias? Certainly; and, as a director of the mill, to see that the others have a fair trial.
8777. And you are prepared to pay a fair wage? Yes; the wages that are now going. We had a hard struggle for the first few years, and previous to that we had very hard times, and we have all that to pull up. There are very few of the pioneers left in this district.
8778. *By Mr. Nielson:* In any other district? Further south I found people who had been living there for fifty or sixty years.
8779. *By the Chairman:* They are not the pioneers? They are the fathers of families.
8780. *By Mr. Nielson:* The men who founded the Woongarra Scrub have lost their places? That may be so.
8781. *By Mr. Paget:* To enable you to pay the wages you anticipate you will have to pay to white men, do you think the bonus period should be continued indefinitely? It appears so to me, but we have not had the experience yet.
8782. Without protection would you be able to pay the wages that are now being paid to white men on the Mossman? No.

WILLIAM HENRY BUCHANAN, Cane Farmer and Acting Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Mossman Central Mill, examined:

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8783. *By the Chairman:* Are you a sugar-cane grower? Yes.
8784. What is the area of your land? 480 acres.
8785. How much of that is under cane? About 175 acres.
8786. How much did you cut last year? About 100 acres.
8787. For what tonnage of cane? 2,485 tons.
8788. How did you cut it, with white or coloured labour? Coloured labour.
8789. Hindoos and kanakas? No; Hindoo labour.
8790. By contract? Yes; by contract.
8791. At what price? 2s. 6d. for trashed cane.
8792. Is yours all level country? Yes.
8793. *By Mr. Paget:* Was it cut by the mill gang or were they employed by yourself? Through the mill. I am also the executor for John Pringle's estate, and they have been cutting since the commencement of the white labour period with white labour. I mention this just to show that I have had some experience with both black and white labour.
8794. *By the Chairman:* What conclusion have you arrived at? Without the continuation of the bonus or some heavy protection being given, there is no possible chance of growing cane by white labour.
8795. *By Mr. Nielson:* As a grower, which would you prefer—the bonus or tariff protection? The bonus system would be the best, because there is bound to be a certain amount of coloured labour used

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in the district, and we would derive more benefit from the bonus, and would not have the same competition. If we have to grow cane with white labour, we want to get the best conditions possible.

8796. *By Mr. Paget*: You think it is preferable that the grower should receive direct protection through the bonus instead of through the manufacturer? I think it would be better to go direct to the grower.

8797. You think that, with a continuation of the bonus, a portion of the crop might still be grown with white labour? It would be optional with the growers whether they employed white or coloured labour, and if the white labour was a success there is no doubt they would employ white men only.

8798. *By Mr. Nielson*: It is optional now, and will be next year? It is optional, but there will be about 7s. a ton difference.

8799. You do not expect to get the bonus and grow cane with Hindoos? No; but I am just pointing that out.

8800. *By Mr. Paget*: What price did you pay last year for cane delivered at the mill? 17s. a ton. Of course there will be a further payment of 9d. a ton about July—the balance of the bonus.

8801. Was that delivered on the trucks? Yes.

8802. At any distance from the mill? Yes. All the growers are on exactly the same footing, excepting Chinese growers, from whom 2s. a ton is deducted.

8803. *By Mr. Nielson*: What for? To show that the shareholders of the mill have done all they can to prevent leases being granted to Chinese and other coloured aliens. A resolution to that effect was passed by the shareholders five or six years ago.

8804. *By Mr. Paget*: How many white farmers are supplying cane to the mill? Ninety-six. There are sixty-four registered for rebate this year, and thirty-two are not registered.

8805. How many Chinese growers are there? There is one naturalised and one not naturalised, only the latter of whom has 2s. a ton deducted.

8806. Are there any Polynesians growing cane for the mill? No. There is one Hindoo.

8807. *By Mr. Nielson*: Does the Hindoo get the same price as the white grower, or the same as the Chinaman? He gets the same as the white growers.

8808. *By Mr. Paget*: Your company have taken some steps to engage white labour for the cutting this year? Yes. At present we have ten gangs of white men signed on, with an average of fourteen or fifteen in each gang.

8809. How many of those gangs are here at the present time? The whole of the gangs are here now, with the exception of two, and they are to arrive next week.

8810. What are the eight gangs doing now? Some of them are trashing cane and other work.

8811. Are any cutting cordwood? Not the gangs that are to cut cane.

8812. What wages are you paying them at present? 17s. 6d. an acre for trashing.

8813. *By the Chairman*: How long has that been going on? Three or four weeks.

8814. What wages have they been making? From 5s. to 7s. 6d. a day, I understand. It all depends on the cane.

8815. *By Mr. Paget*: Are they working steadily at it, or are any of the men falling out? Very few have fallen out so far.

8816. What are the rates you have fixed for harvesting this year? On farms where the cane averages—

		Trashed.	Untrashed.
1½ tons per acre and upwards	...	4s. 6d. per ton	5s. 0d. per ton.
13 tons per acre	...	4s. 9d. "	5s. 3d. "
12 do.	...	5s. 0d. "	5s. 6d. "
11 do.	...	5s. 3d. "	5s. 9d. "
10 do.	...	5s. 6d. "	6s. 0d. "

With an additional 6d. per ton extra for each ton per acre below 10 tons, exclusive of 6d. per ton for untrashed cane.

8817. Have they been agreed to? Yes. The agreements are signed by every man in the group this year to make them all responsible to the mill.

8818. They are working on the share-and-share alike system? Yes.

8819. Have your rates been agreed to by the Sugar Workers' Union? I could not say.

8820. You are working independently of the union? Yes; so far.

8821. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is anything kept back from the men so as to make them continue at their work?

We keep back 30s. a month from the time they start crushing. The trashing money they receive in full. We pay the fares of the men from the South, and instead of deducting the full amount from one month's pay, we spread it over four months so as not to be too rough on the men, most of whom are married. We had to consider their wives and families to a great extent.

8822. *By the Chairman*: From what part of the Commonwealth are they chiefly coming? There are three gangs from New South Wales, one from Victoria, and there are six Queensland gangs.

8823. *By Mr. Nielson*: Where are the Queensland men coming from? All from south of Townsville, but one gang.

8824. *By the Chairman*: Has any attempt been made to get men in Brisbane? I could not say. We went to the sugar districts, like Bundaberg, and we thought they were the best places to go.

8825. Have you got all the labour you require for this year? We expect there will be some leaving, and that later on we shall have to fall back on the firewood contractors to keep up the gangs to their full strength. We have firewood contracts for 600 or 700 cords, at 7s. a cord, and some of the men appear to be a fairly good sort.

8826. *By Mr. Paget*: Meanwhile you will keep those men employed in cutting firewood? As much as possible. We have 500 or 600 cords now—more than sufficient for this season. Wood deteriorates a good deal, and we are bound to lose a little on it, but our desire is to keep the labour about the district. There is another gang trashing that has not signed on for the mill, as we could not find enough firewood for them to cut.

8827. *By the Chairman*: What arrangements have you made for the housing of the gangs? They find their own tents, and we find a dining-room for each gang, a cooking galley, and cooking utensils.

8828. *By Mr. Paget*: You are following out the system adopted by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? Our agreements are the same as the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, with a few alterations necessitated by the different conditions.

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8829. *By the Chairman*: You find them in wool and water? Yes.
8830. What about cooking? They find their own cook. The cook shares with the others.
8831. Does each gang bring a cook with it? Yes.
8832. They prefer to live in tents? They have no objection to living in tents. We also provide them with two large tables and a perforated zinc safe for each gang.
8833. Do you do anything in the way of providing a reading-room, or some place for relaxation in the evening? There is a reading-room and school of arts here.
8834. The mill has not done anything in that direction? No.
8835. Do you not think it would be advantageous to provide something for the evening to prevent the men from drifting to the hotel? It would be easy for the men to go to the school of arts than to the hotels if they wished to do so.
8836. Are they allowed to go into the school of arts? Yes, by paying £1 a year.
8837. But men who are birds of passage would not pay a yearly subscription? They could take a quarterly ticket.
8838. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you not such an institution as that among the mill employees? No.
8839. *By the Chairman*: Do you not think it would be to your advantage to keep these men sober? We are doing our best towards that.
8840. Do you not think that by supplying a reading-room it would make different men of them? There is a reading-room here now, and it is only 50 yards from the mill.
8841. But they have to pay for that? We pay them a good wage, and as we find them all these things I have mentioned I think they get the best of it.
8842. Do the men here appear to be temperate? Fairly temperate. There are good and bad in every gang.
8843. *By Mr. Paget*: And in every walk of life? Yes. It is too early yet to judge the men. We have done our best to get the best labour in the Commonwealth, and if these men do not turn out a success then it is a poor lookout to get labour to do it.
8844. *By the Chairman*: Are you aware that the shipping companies are going to make a reduction in the fares? We approached the different shipping companies here before doing anything, and they allowed a 25 per cent. reduction. The men will have to pay the fare less 25 per cent.
8845. *By Mr. Paget*: Did not your company engage a white gang in Victoria last year? Yes.
8846. Was it before the last crushing season? It was engaged at the end of the last crushing—in November. That gang has not done any cutting at all yet.
8847. They have been doing ordinary cultivation? Yes.
8848. How have they been getting along at that? Very well.
8849. What wages do they get? 25s a week and found. We also advanced their fares and deducted the amount from their wages in three or four instalments.
8850. These men have given you satisfaction so far as they have gone? Twenty-one were engaged, and two of them bolted.
8851. Did those two pay their passages before they bolted? No; they did not. Most of the others have given satisfaction.
8852. *By the Chairman*: These men came from Victoria? Yes.
8853. Did you hear any complaints from them about the hot weather? They complained about the heat, but it was nothing serious.
8854. We all complain about the heat—it was serious complaints that I meant? No, there was nothing serious.
8855. Their health does not seem to be suffering? Most of them had the fever, but they have recovered since.
8856. That has an effect on everyone who comes up here to live? I think so.
8857. Are they housed in tents? Yes.
8858. Do they have their own cook? We find the cook, and they are satisfied with the cooking. They have had the one cook right through, so they must be fairly satisfied.
8859. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is Mr. Jones, the secretary of the mill, back yet? No; he will be back next week.
8860. Do you know that he could have got more men? We were told that he had a better chance of getting men if he had not gone away.
8861. In what districts? Bundaberg, Maryborough, Tweed Heads, and the Clarence River. He found more difficulty in getting men at the Clarence River than anywhere else, and that was the place we expected to get the biggest supply from.
8862. *By the Chairman*: We met two men on the lookout for work—in fact, they came up with us in the steamer—and they said that they came from the northern rivers district of New South Wales, and that there were many others who would come to North Queensland to work if the conditions were good? I think the conditions are favourable.
8863. Perhaps your secretary may not have struck that particular district? We have had applications from men who never saw a stick of sugar-cane, and we made it our business to go to the districts where the men are who can cut cane. We went into the business properly to engage the best labour available.
8864. *By Mr. Nielson*: And have you got sufficient men? Yes, so far.
8865. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you employ kanakas? No.
8866. Can you give us any idea about the deportation of the kanakas? A number of the islanders do not want to go, but prefer to remain. There is one kauaka at Bailey's Creek who is married and has been here for thirty years. He worked for my father. He does not want to go home.
8867. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is he a ticket "boy"? I am not sure whether he is or not.
8868. *By Mr. Paget*: You do not know much about the kanaka question? I should know a good deal about it.
8869. Have you considered the question of how to deport them? No. I did not intend to give evidence to-day at all.
8870. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are there any unemployed here? No, there are very few of any repute—men who look like workers.
8871. Have you ever taken advantage of the Government Labour Bureau? Yes; and with a very bad result. Last year we received a communication from Mr. Staines, clerk of petty sessions at Port Douglas, asking

us to do what we could to relieve some of the unemployed in Townsville. We got up several gangs, and distributed them among two or three growers. Well, most of them were practically useless. So far as the last gang was concerned, we got nineteen or twenty men from Townsville. Three of them went away, but the others appeared to be fairly good.

8872. What was wrong with them? They were too fond of beer-chewing, and they did not like hard work.

8873. Do you think that the establishment of a systematically-run Labour Bureau would be of assistance to the industry? From my past experience, I would sooner send men to eugage labour. I think it is more reliable to go and inquire for yourself than do the other way.

8874. Most of the districts we have been to do not go to the same trouble as you? We have gone to a lot of trouble. We understand that it is "White Australia" or nothing, and we will not die without having a kick.

8875. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you some information in those documents in front of you? Yes; I have a list of the names of those who left, to show that white labour is not too reliable.

8876. Will you give us the total figures? Of the number who passed through our hands the following left during the crushing of 1904, namely:—July, 22; August, 25; September, 30; October, 54; November, 49; December, 43; January (1905), 12, making a total of 235 who left the mill.

8877. *By the Chairman*: What is the average number of men you employed in the mill? Inside the mill yard, the average number of men employed during the crushing season of 1904 was 163, and during the crushing season of 1905, 158. The total number of men employed for the year, from 1st March, 1905, to the 28th of February, 1906, was 383, including mill and yard hands, tramway employees, and field workers. Then the number who left the mill during the crushing of 1905 was as follows:—June, 41; July, 36; August, 30; September, 26; October, 40; November, 34; total for the six months, 207.

8878. *By Mr. Paget*: So the conditions did not improve very much? No.

8879. *By Mr. Nielson*: What was the trouble—drink? Drink was mostly the trouble. That had a lot to do with it. A lot of them keep on until they get a few pounds, and then away they go. They only want a few pounds to carry them along to somewhere else, and away they go.

8880. Were you able to replace all those men last year? Yes.

8881. Then you had plenty labour to pull through with? No. We had to put on some men that we would not have employed if there had been plenty of men available.

8882. *By the Chairman*: How many hotels are there here? Five.

8883. Are they licensed from Port Douglas? Yes. They are country licenses, and only pay half the license fee that is paid in towns.

8884. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think they ought to extend the Towns Police Act to the Mossman? I do not know.

8885. *By the Chairman*: Is there a surveyed township here? No. It is a private township. Most of land is leased.

8886. *By Mr. Paget*: Is the land in the township mortgaged to the Government? Most of it is. There is very little freehold land in the township.

8887. *By the Chairman*: How long is it since the last license was granted? About three years.

8888. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are any of your directors interested in a hotel? I own the nearest one.

8889. That is probably the best farm you have got? There is not much in farming. I lease my hotel.

GEORGE NIELSON, Cane Farmer, examined:

8890. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer.

8891. What is the area of your farm? I lease 75 acres, and I am purchasing 80 acres.

8892. What quantity of cane did you cut last year? 82 acres for a tonnage of 800 tons. The cane was 4 May, 1906.

8893. Did you cut it with white or black labour? Coloured labour. It was cut by the mill company's gang.

8894. Are you registered? I am this year.

8895. Will the mill company cut for you this year? No. I intend to harvest mine privately this year.

8896. Are you going to cut with family labour? No. I have a small gang of Italians.

8897. What is the strength of your gang? Four just now.

8898. What are you paying them? 35s. a week, and they find themselves.

8899. Is that for the harvesting season? No; in the slack season. In the harvesting season I shall have to pay them 7s. a day.

8900. Have the men been long in the country? Three of them have been in Queensland for several years.

8901. Are they a satisfactory class of labour? They are very satisfactory.

8902. *By Mr. Paget*: Are they some of the men who were introduced to the State by Mr. Fraire fifteen or sixteen years ago? No.

8903. *By the Chairman*: How long have you lived here? A little over ten years.

8904. Have you done any contract work yourself? Yes.

8905. And you have retained your health? Yes; until within the last year. I have had a lot of fever this last year.

8906. Do you work just the ordinary hours, or do you accommodate yourself to the climatic conditions? I generally work with the gangs, and stay in the fields as long as they are there; but just now I could not do a full day's work. I could work horses, but I could not chip all day long.

8907. *By Mr. Paget*: Do your men have a "spell-ho" in the middle of the day? No. They have a quarter of an hour in the morning, another in the afternoon, and an hour for dinner.

8908. *By the Chairman*: Have you ever tried to induce them to work earlier and later, and to spell longer in the middle of the day? Yes. In the month of December I got them to start at 5 in the morning and work till half-past 7; then they started at 9 and worked till 12, beginning again at 1 and working till 6, and they preferred working that way. We find that from 8 to 10 o'clock in the morning is about the hottest part of the day. By getting them to start at 5 and work for 2½ hours, and then have an hour for breakfast, they worked more satisfactorily.

- G. Nielson. 8909. Had you any difficulty in getting them to do that? None whatever.
8910. *By Mr. Paget*: You intend to rely upon your own endeavours to obtain suitable white labour? To a certain extent. During the past year I have had the gangs from the mill to help me; but with the number of men I have I cannot keep on all the year round, and I am forced to ask the mill for labour when the work becomes heavy.
8911. *By the Chairman*: Have you ever employed kauaka labour? Yes.
8912. Have you given any consideration to the question of their deportation? I have taken some interest in mission work, and have spoken to many of the islanders; and it appears to me that it would be a great hardship to deport those who have been in Queensland for fifteen years and upwards. The comparatively recent arrivals have not yet lost touch with their island homes, and I do not think it would be any particular hardship to send them back.
8913. Have you given any thought to the system of deportation? I have asked several islanders whether there is any truth in the statement that there is no storage of food in the islands, and I have been told by the "boys" and by one or two missionaries who have been on the islands that it is not the custom to store food, that to deport large numbers at certain times would lead to hardship, and that it will be necessary to send a supply of food to the islands to last for a certain time.
8914. Would that apply to both the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands? Principally to the Solomon group.
8915. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are there any Malayta "boys" about here? A good many.
8916. There are no missionaries in Malayta away from the coast? No. The Malayta "boys" here principally belong to the hill tribes.
8917. *By the Chairman*: Do you agree generally with what has been said by the previous witnesses? Yes.

JAMES PATRICK REYNOLDS, Cane Farmer, examined:

- J.P. Reynolds. 8918. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer. I am managing for my mother.
8919. What experience have you had up here? Ten years.
8920. What is the area of your farm? 120 acres.
8921. How much is under cane? It is all under cane.
8922. How much did you cut last year? 97 acres, for a tonnage of 1,475 tons.
8923. Did you cut it with white or black labour? With black labour.
8924. What did you pay? The mill price. The mill gangs cut it.
8925. Are you registered now for the banns? I have registered 35 acres.
8926. What was your reason for not registering more? I was afraid I would not get it cut by white labour.
8927. What white labour are you employing in connection with the cultivation of those 35 acres? Mostly casual labour. I am paying the men 6s. a day, and find themselves.
8928. Did you get plenty of men at that price? Yes; there is a good supply.
8929. Are they a decent class of men? They are not too reliable.
8930. What is the cause of their unreliability? I think they only work to get a few shillings to go further on.
8931. *By Mr. Paget*: Men who want to go prospecting, and so on? Yes. I am right on the road.
8932. *By the Chairman*: Have you any trouble through drink? Not while they are working. We are seven miles from a public house.
8933. What coloured labour do you employ? Indians and kanakas.
8934. Have you any kanakas under agreement? Two.
8935. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you made any arrangements for harvesting your cane this year? The mill has made arrangements.
8936. You are relying on the efforts of the mill to obtain sufficient white labour? Yes.
8937. Will you in the future carry out your own operations or rely upon the mill? I will rely upon the mill.
8938. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you intend to register any more if things go on all right this year? If the white labour is a success I will register, but if it is not a success I will not register.
8939. *By the Chairman*: Do you live here? Yes; I have lived here practically all my life. I have lived here for twenty years, and I am now twenty-eight.
8940. Is your mother living here? Yes.
8941. Any family? Yes; a family of seven.
8942. Have they all fairly good health? Yes.
8943. You have nothing to complain of as regards the climate? No. I get the malarial fever occasionally.
8944. That is the ordinary malarial fever? Yes.
8945. You cannot compare this work with that of any other place, because you have always lived here? The work is a bit tedious at times.
8946. All work is like that? Yes.
8947. Neither can you compare the climate? No.
8948. Has your mother good health? Yes.
8949. Is there anything else you intended to tell us that we have not elicited from you? Well, with reference to kanaka deportation, my idea of the thing is to allow them to decrease gradually, say, to allow them to sign on for six months, or not more than six months, after the end of this year. It should be made lawful to let them sign on for a time, and when a shipload is ready the Government can see that they are all returned to their proper localities.
8950. How many should be engaged in the Mossman, for you know a lot of people in Mackay would want some of these "boys"? I think the sugar districts down South should not be allowed to employ them at all.
8951. Do you mean south of Mossman? Say south of Townsville.
8952. And up here you should be allowed to employ them for six months? Yes; that is what I think.

ANDREW JACK, Cane Farmer, examined:

A. Jack.

4 May, 1906.

8953. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your farm? About 400 acres.
 8954. How much have you under cane? 60 acres.
 8955. How much did you cut last year? 50 acres.
 8956. For what tonnage? 974 tons.
 8957. With what class of labour did you cut your cane? Coloured.
 8958. Hindoos or kanakas? Kanakas.
 8959. *By Mr. Paget:* Were they employed by yourself? No, by the company. It was the company's gang that cut my cane.
 8960. *By the Chairman:* Have you registered now? Yes, I have registered the whole of my area now.
 8961. What labour have you been employing—hired labour? Yes, hired labour.
 8962. What wages are you paying? 25s. a week and keep.
 8963. Do they live in your house or cook for themselves, or what do they do? I board them.
 8964. Have you had any difficulty so far in getting what men you wanted? No; I never had any difficulty in getting what men I wanted.
 8965. Are they a desirable class of men? Some of them are, but with regard to the others, if the sugar industry had to depend on them, it would go to the wall.
 8966. But some are desirable? Yes; some are very good men.
 8967. Are you far from a public-house? About 4 miles.
 8968. To what do you attribute the unreliability of the men you describe as unfit? A lot of them are not adapted to that class of labour. Then others go on till Saturday evening comes, when they go off in the tram into town and forget to come back again.
 8969. Drink? Yes; some of the m. They are not all that way.
 8970. The trouble with the majority of them is owing to drink? Yes.
 8971. *By Mr. Paget:* Some of the men have had no experience in that class of work? That is the main thing against them. If you want to carry on this industry you will have to get men who were brought up in agricultural districts.
 8972. Where would you get them? From the agricultural districts of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.
 8973. *By the Chairman:* And failing a supply from these sources? Then the quicker you can import them the better.
 8974. Provided they are agricultural labourers? Yes. I would not like to be a party to importing them until we fail to obtain them within the Commonwealth.
 8975. Are you a member of the Farmers' Association? No; I am on my own.
 8976. You have not found it necessary to get labour for yourself from the South? I might, but I am a shareholder in the company.
 8977. In that way the company are doing useful work? Yes; they have been doing very useful work.
 8978. Has the question of deporting the kanakas engaged your attention at all? I consider if the Government put themselves about a bit, and tried to fall in with the policy of Australia, they will have to do it.
 8979. I do not want that—Can you suggest any method of giving effect to the law requiring the deportation of the kanakas? There are a lot of "boys" not working under agreement now, and they are working against the Act. Why should they be permitted to do so?
 8980. *By Mr. Nielson:* They are not permitted? They are permitted by the officials.
 8981. *By the Chairman:* Can you suggest any scheme by which the islanders can be deported without inflicting any unnecessary hardship upon them? By all means there should be no hardship inflicted upon them.
 8982. How is it to be avoided? If "boys" do not sign on again within three months they are supposed to be deported, but they are allowed to work outside.
 8983. *By Mr. Nielson:* The Act does not say they are bound to sign on or go home? I thought they had to find employment within three months.
 8984. *By Mr. Paget:* The Commonwealth Act says that any islander who is not at work for one month can be deported even before 31st December; but there are no officials appointed by the Commonwealth to carry out that provision? If the State Parliament would take the right step, a great number would not be here at the expiration of this year.
 8985. *By the Chairman:* What do you suggest should be done? Sufficient steamers should be chartered to take them away when the opportunity offers.
 8986. Have you given consideration to the fact that there might not be a sufficient supply of food for them on their arrival at the islands? It is the duty of the State or the Commonwealth to send shipments of provisions down with the islanders.
 8987. Persons who have experience say that that would lead to trouble in the islands, and that there would be fights over the provisions? We have heard a great deal, but we have heard of no trouble. "Boys" are being deported at the present time.
 8988. *By Mr. Paget:* Hitherto they have been going home in the ordinary numbers, but you are suggesting that 400 or 500 should be sent over at one time in a steamer? Yes; they should charter large steamers. If that cannot be done, seeing the North is not so convenient to a supply of labour, I should certainly draw a colour line for twelve months.
 8989. *By the Chairman:* Where would you draw the colour line? At Townsville. That would give an opportunity of deporting the "boys." I do not see why they should suffer in the least. I would not allow any canegrower to employ coloured labour unless he had one-half of his area registered and cultivated by white labour. I would not allow anyone to take advantage of the kanakas at the expense of the rest of the Commonwealth.
 8990. *By Mr. Paget:* Would you suggest that the colour line should apply to kanakas only? Yes.
 8991. Would you allow Chinese and Hindoos to live in the Southern States? Not if I could get rid of them, but you cannot. My reason for suggesting that the colour line should be drawn at Townsville is that people further south have better facilities for obtaining white labour.
 8992. You are more isolated here? Yes.
 8993. *By the Chairman:* Are you a shareholder in the mill? Yes.

- A. Jack. 8994. You are trying to get white labour from the Bundaberg district? Certainly; we have a perfect right to live. The average crop here last year was 13½ tons per acre, and it will take one man to thoroughly cultivate 10 acres of cane.
- 4 May, 1906. 8995. *By Mr. Paget*: Would one man be able to harvest 10 acres? No. That area would give a yield of 13½ tons, and, at 23s. a ton including the bonus, the farmer would receive £153. Wages, including rations, would run into £110 a year. The cost of cutting untrashed cane at 5s. would be £33 5s. Then there are a lot of them here I might tell you—and I know this for a positive fact—who are paying more than 1s. per ton royalty, which runs into £6 13s., making a total altogether of £150 5s. That leaves a balance of £2 12s. as profit. There are exceptional cases where some men do better, but you have to take the average. I have taken the average of the district because it is that, and not what the individual grower does, that is going to make the district.
8996. What do you suggest? Well, it is a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence for the farmer if the industry is to be carried on. If they want to carry the industry on they will have to give a higher protective duty. It is no use driving the cheap labour out of the country if you are going to allow goods paid by cheap labour to come into the country.
8997. *By the Chairman*: You say that there must be a bonus or protective duty? I would sooner see a higher protective duty myself than a bonus.
8998. Is there anything else you would like to say? The sugar industry pays higher wages than any other agricultural industry in Australia, or in the world, for that matter, and there is a lesser number of hours for the workmen. If you take the dairy industry or the wheat industry, they all work a greater number of hours, and do not pay the same wages as are paid in the sugar industry. It does not matter to us if we have to pay better wages so long as we can get a better price for our cane.
8999. *By Mr. Paget*: Assuming that the protective duty was not continued, would you be able to compete with other sugar-growing countries? No.
9000. Would the white men come to this district and work for the same wages that they work for in New South Wales or Victoria? They would not, and the industry would go down.

GEORGE WOODVILLE MUNTZ, Cane Farmer, examined:

- G. W. Muntz. 9001. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your holding? About 200 acres under cane.
- 4 May, 1906. 9002. How much of that did you cut last year? About 190 acres.
9003. For what tonnage? Two thousand five hundred tons.
9004. Did you cut it with white or black labour? Partly white and partly black.
9005. It was cut for you by the mill? Yes.
9006. *By Mr. Paget*: Was the white labour supplied by the mill? No; the white labour was supplied by the four registered growers. The gang signed on, and the contracts were completed for the four registered growers.
9007. Were you one of the four? Yes.
9008. *By the Chairman*: Are you registered now? Yes; for nearly the whole of our area.
9009. *By Mr. Paget*: What was your experience as to the cutting by white labour last year? It was done by contract.
9010. At what price? First of all the contract was signed for 5s. per ton, and, after the work had been proceeding for some time, the contractor came and said he could not do it for the money, and we raised the price to 5s. 6d.
9011. That was for cutting and loading untrashed cane? Yes, and laying the lines.
9012. What did that cane run to per acre? 17 tons.
9013. What wages did the men average? I believe the contractor paid his men 7s. a day.
9014. It was not a share-and-share alike gang? No. One man took the contract and paid the others 7s. a day without tucker, and 5s. a day with tucker.
9015. How did the work go on; was it satisfactory, and did they send in the number of tons they contracted for? No. I did not approve of the way it was done at all. They did not send in the number of tons that were required according to the contract, and I understand that the contractor lost money; but that has nothing to do with me.
9016. You say it has nothing to do with you; but all the same you are under contract to supply so much cane to the mill, and it has everything to do with you? The mill officials did not enforce that part of the contract. They allowed it to go by default.
9017. So as to help you along? They wanted to try the system. I may say that I had always been a great opponent to white labour for the sugar industry, but as this was looked upon as an experiment, we decided to give every encouragement to the white gang.
9018. You did not place any obstacles in the road? Not the slightest. I assisted them all I could.
9019. *By the Chairman*: In view of the action to be taken by the authorities this year, this is regarded as a test stage of the experiment? We regard it as necessary that we have to come to white labour.
9020. And you are doing the best you can to make it a success? Yes.
9021. Have you been many years in this district? Yes; I have been ten years in this district.
9022. Since the mill was built? Just about the time the mill was built.
9023. Have you worked yourself on your farm? When I first came here I worked as hard as any kanaka or any white man.
9024. This is the furthest place North that cane is grown in Australia? Yes.
9025. What has been your experience with regard to your health—have you found the climate trying? I found the climate very enervating. In fact, I was at Brisbane for the first three months of this year—the doctor ordered me to leave at last.
9026. Have you any family? My mother and sisters.
9027. Do they live here? Only my mother and one sister are here now. Another sister was here, but I found it necessary to remove her. I cannot remove my mother, and the other sister finds it necessary to stop to look after her.
9028. You attribute that to the climate? Yes.
9029. *By Mr. Paget*: Your sisters are unmarried? Yes.
9030. *By the Chairman*: You said you used to work hard at first? Yes; but I found, after a few years of hard work, that I was unable to do the work I previously did.

9031. *By Mr. Paget:* There was a conference held last year in Townsville in connection with this new G. W. Muntz system; were there any delegates sent from the Mossman? I was a delegate on two occasions for this district. I was a delegate to the Townsville conference, and once when the Federal party visited Cairns. 4 May, 1906.

9032. Can you give us any information as to what findings were come to at those conferences? The one at Townsville was more of a demonstration in favour of white labour. I looked on the question as having been settled by the Federal Government, and I went there as a man who purs his business before politics, and to decide the best way of working with white labour, and also to meet these Southern men. But I heard no practical suggestion made. I laid the case for this district before the conference and it was sympathetically received. I pointed out that we were the farthest North of all the sugar districts, and we were so far away from the Southern centres of population that we did not have the same advantages as the Southern districts had. Our own experience has proved that we cannot expect men to come past Townsville and Cairns, where they have all the comforts of civilisation, to come to a place like Mossman. We anticipate great difficulty during the transition stage. I suggested to the Federal Government that we should be allowed to use kanakas for a longer period in the North.

9033. *By the Chairman:* What would you suggest, in view of the existing conditions, now that the time is nearly up? My ideas have not altered at all. The approach of the end of the period has not altered my views at all.

9034. *By Mr. Paget:* You say you should be allowed to use the kanakas for a longer period, so what period do you suggest; or have you considered the matter at all? I should say at least two years should be allowed, and longer if possible.

9035. *By the Chairman:* During those two years, what would be done in order to prevent the same position obtaining that obtains now? It is all a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. Those of us who have engaged white labour, and harvested our crops successfully, have found that there is no loss, at any rate.

9036. There is no loss with white labour? No, not with the bonus; but we have been so bothered. I could give you figures as to my experience with white men.

9037. *By Mr. Nielson:* But how would you be better off at the end of two years? We would have an opportunity of getting better men into the district.

9038. But men will not stay here until the kanakas' jobs are finished? They are not waiting now. We seem to have found work for everyone here now. The only thing that prevents more white labour being employed is our unfortunate experience with that labour in the past. The first year that cane was registered eight or ten growers registered, and after that the number dropped to four.

9039. *By Mr. Paget:* Why? Because of the unsatisfactory nature of the labour.

9040. *By Mr. Nielson:* What made it unsatisfactory? It was largely due to the drinking habits of the men, and they were also unsuitable for the work.

9041. You are waiting till the other districts break in men? Until the other districts are full up.

9042. Every man is not a cane-cutter? For my own part I do not think the labour is in Australia.

9043. *By the Chairman:* You do not think there is a sufficiency? No. When I was at Warwick three months ago my brothers, who are engaged in the dairying industry, wanted a man, and it took them a fortnight to get one, though they were offering 2s. 6d. a week more than other people.

9044. *By Mr. Paget:* What wages are they paying? £1 a week.

9045. How would you propose to supply the deficiency? By immigration.

9046. *By Mr. Nielson:* Immigrants would be inexperienced, too? They would; but they could not be more inexperienced than some men we have had.

9047. *By Mr. Paget:* You desire to obtain agricultural labourers? Yes.

9048. *By Mr. Nielson:* They all have to learn, even the kanaka? Yes; but we do not mind teaching them so long as they are sober.

9049. *By the Chairman:* You know there is a difficulty in getting any large number of agricultural labourers from the British Isles? I do not know that.

9050. Do you not know that they are being attracted to Canada? I was going to say Canada seems to have no difficulty, and it has no better attractions.

9051. Would you approve of Italian immigration? Yes. We have employed Italians with great success.

9052. Have you had any experience of Danes? No. I had one Dane, and I did not approve of him much as a labourer.

9053. Do you remember the Italians that Mr. Fraire brought to Queensland? A lot of Finns were brought North.

9054. Where were they brought to? To Chillagoe.

9055. Is there anything else you wish to say? Last year twenty white men went through my books, independent of my permanent hands. Six were discharged or left through drink; seven worked for periods of under two weeks and left because the work was unsatisfactory, or were discharged because they were unsatisfactory; and the balance were good men.

9056. I suppose you would not say that men who were intemperate were not good men simply because of their failing in that respect? It seems to me that the constitution is not able to stand drink in the North. I have a good deal of sympathy with the men in their hard work; but the climate is such that a glass or two of grog has far more effect on them than it has in the South.

9057. Have you given any attention to the question of the deportation of the kanakas? I have given it a lot.

9058. What do you consider is the best way of carrying it out? The question is surrounded with such grave responsibilities that I would not like to take it upon myself to suggest anything. The Federal Government have done the thing, and the best thing they can do is to finish it up. That is the result of my very careful deliberation.

ROBERT PUNTIN TUNNIE, Cane Farmer, and Manager for Messrs. Jack and Newell, merchants,
examined:

9059. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane-grower, and manager for Messrs. Jack and Newell, at R. P. Tunnie, Port Douglas.

9060. What area of cane are you growing? About 150 acres. My selection contains 333 acres 4 May, 1906, altogether.

- R. P. Tunnie. 9061. How much did you cut last year? About 100 acres, for a tonnage of 660 tons. The cane suffered very severely from grubs, while it was also cut late the previous year.
- 4 May, 1906. 9062. With what class of labour did you cut it? Black labour, under the supervision of the mill company.
9063. Have you registered this year? My son has registered about 150 acres. Then I have got 30 acres more cultivated by coloured labour.
9064. Have you had any difficulty in getting suitable labour to cultivate the registered area? My son has. He is superintending the place, and has had to pay very high wages.
9065. What is he paying? As much as 30s. a week and found in the off season.
9066. *By Mr. Nielson*: What are his lowest wages? He is paying 30s. a week for ploughmen.
9067. *By the Chairman*: Is he paying 30s. a week for chipping and work like that? I could not say; but I know he has had a difficulty in getting white labour for chipping.
9068. *By Mr. Paget*: What arrangements have you made for harvesting the coming crop? It is all left in the hands of the mill company, of which I am a shareholder.
9069. *By the Chairman*: Have you given any attention to the deportation of the kanakas? I have. I have arrived at the conclusion that the kanaka is very unfairly dealt with. Not later than three weeks ago an unfortunate kanaka came up to me in the street in Port Douglas, and asked if I could give him a job. I said I had no work; and he said, "Well, me very hungry, me want work and can't get it." As the Federal Parliament has determined upon the deportation of the kanakas, it should keep the men until they are sent away. The position is going to be very serious before they are deported. There will be nothing but robbery and murder.
9070. Are they such an undesirable class as that? No; but they are not able to get work. If employers have to pay this extra passage money they will not employ the kanakas. Most of the "boys" walking about now would be employed but for that restriction.
9071. *By Mr. Nielson*: But could they not give them so much less wages? No. The "boys" will not accept less wages.
9072. Then they are not too hard up? They are so hard up that they cannot get work. If they are going to send them away they should be given a certain time.
9073. *By the Chairman*: What time would you suggest? It would be fair and reasonable to stop kanakas coming into the State, and those now here should remain until they die out, which would take place in the course of a few years. When I came to Port Douglas twenty years ago, there were 500 aboriginals on the beach, and now you could not find fifty. All the others have died out.

WILLIAM MACKAY, Cane Farmer, examined:

- W. Mackay. 9074. *By the Chairman*: You are a canegrower, and you are also chairman of the Douglas Shire Council? Yes.
- 4 May, 1906. 9075. What area have you? I have 110 acres under cane.
9076. Have you more land than that? Yes; I have 127 acres altogether.
9077. All that is suitable is under cane? Yes.
9078. How much did you cut last year? 1,300 tons.
9079. That was cut by the mill gangs? Yes; by Hindoos.
9080. Have you registered? No.
9081. And your reason for not registering is the uncertainty? No; my reason for not registering is that I had several "boys" under agreement up till the 31st of December of this year. I would have had to pay them right up till the end of the year, and then I would have the uncertainty of getting white labour, so I decided to stick to them for this year.
9082. We have heard a great deal about the class of labour here and the circumstances under which it could be employed—do you agree with the bulk of what has been said? Yes.
9083. Can you suggest any means by which labourers will be attracted to the district and maintained in the district—Would they be inclined to stop here if a system of small settlements were adopted; that is, small areas of land to make farms for the men? Yes; there is some land in the district that would be suitable for that purpose, but it is far away from here.
9084. How far is it? There is plenty of splendid land on the Daintree.
9085. Is it held privately or is it Crown land? It is held privately.
9086. Would it be possible to settle persons on it who would make it their home and their headquarters? It would be quite possible under certain circumstances—that is, provided they can get their produce taken away, and provided that they get the land for a reasonable amount. There are bananas growing there, and the few people who are there gain their livelihood from banana growing.
9087. How do they get their produce away? By small boats from Daintree to Port Douglas.
9088. There is no transit overland? No.
9089. Is there any prospect of your tramway being extended in that direction? No.
9090. *By Mr. Paget*: In the event of workers' homes being established there, would it be possible for the men to go home at the end of each week? No; it is 20 miles from here.
9091. *By the Chairman*: You say there is no prospect of your tramway being extended there, but would you not do so if you had a certainty that cane would be grown there? Yes; if a poll of ratepayers was taken on the subject.
9092. If that land was settled on, and facilities existed, they would all become canegrowers? It would be cheaper to bring it by boat than by tram.
9093. Is there any other land about here on which you could settle people? No; not convenient land.
9094. There is a reserve down Cassowary Creek? Yes.
9095. *By Mr. Paget*: How many miles from the mill? 6 or 8 miles.
9096. *By the Chairman*: Do you know anything about the reserve north of here which used to be the old aborigines' reserve? No. I may say that the people who come here to work do not like going into the back country to settle.
9097. Is there any effort being made by which the holders could sublet their areas into small farms? Yes, I am a leaseholder; and there are several others. I have 137 acres myself out of a 1,280-block.
9098. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you the right to purchase? No; I have nothing of that sort. They would not give me that concession.

9099. *By the Chairman [after looking at the map with the witness]:* There is a town reserve there on the map we have been looking at—It is only 5 miles from the mill; do you know that country? Yes; it is forest land. W. Mackay.
4 May, 1906.

9100. *By Mr. Paget:* And it would not feed a bandicoot? No.

9101. *By the Chairman:* The Crown lands rangers says there are some very nice patches there? I do not know them.

SHIRLEY ARCHBOLD, Cane Farmer, examined:

9102. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer.

9103. What is the area of your property? 240 acres in the selection I am living on.

9104. What area have you under cane? 140 acres.

9105. How much did you cut last year? 700 tons from about 100 acres. The low yield was the result of grubs. S. Archbold.
4 May, 1906.

9106. Was it cut by white or coloured labour? By coloured labour—the mill gang.

9107. Have you registered any this year? 55 acres.

9108. Have you any difficulty in getting white labour to cultivate that land? Not just now.

9109. What wages are you paying? 25s. a week and found for field work, and I shall pay 30s. a week and found in the crushing season.

9110. How far are you from a public house? 5 miles.

9111. What is your experience of the class of labour now available? It seems to be improving.

9112. Is it unreliable and unsatisfactory by reason of physical incapacity on the part of the men? Partly; but it is principally owing to their intemperance.

9113. Are you taking any steps to provide yourself with labour for the coming crushing season? I have already engaged a small gang of men locally, but I do not know where they have come from.

9114. *By Mr. Paget:* You are not depending on the mill gangs this year? No; I am engaging men myself for the white-grown part of the crop.

9115. What nationality are the men? They are of different nationalities. One or two of them are Scandinavians.

9116. Can you suggest any means for supplying the shortage of labour that will exist after the Pacific Islanders go? It is a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. We shall try to induce men to come to us from the Southern farmers.

9117. Supposing the Southern farmers cannot spare them? Then we shall have to do without, or else import men.

9118. By immigration? Yes.

9119. How long have you lived here? Ten years.

9120. Have you come across Italian labour in any quantity? Not in sufficient quantity to pass any opinion upon its value.

9121. At whose expense should the immigrants you speak of be introduced? Naturally we always try to put it on to the other fellow.

9122. In this case who would be the "other fellow"? I should say the Federal Government.

9123. Do you think the Federal Government should bear the cost of introducing immigrants to take the place of the Pacific Islanders whose deportation at the end of this year is due to Federal legislation? Most certainly; they should put us on an equal footing with what we have been previously with respect to a supply of labour.

9124. Do you think that some system of immigration might be devised by which, if the immigrants were offered inducements, they might be prepared to pay part of their passage money? I dare say that the farmers would be prepared to pay something towards it, just as they have been doing in regard to the islanders.

9125. The inducement that might be offered to immigrants to pay a portion of their passage money might be a grant of land, for instance? There is no doubt closer settlement would help us considerably.

9126. Of course the immigrants would be working for wages at first? Yes.

9127. Have you any idea of the average area of the holdings in this district? About 100 acres.

9128. Is there a large area leased by farmers? Pretty well one-half of the available land is leased.

9129. Are the farms leased with a purchasing right? Some of them are, but most of them are not.

9130. Are the leases for long periods? Ten years. They were originally taken up when the mill started, and most of them are falling due now.

9131. Have the lessees the right of renewal? Very few have.

9132. Does such a system conduce to good cultivation towards the end of the leases? It certainly does not.

9133. If it largely prevails, will not the mill suffer in time from the want of cane? The problem will settle itself in one or two years. New agreements will have to be made shortly. If the present lessees do not remain, other will take their places, and they will not take up the land on such terms again.

9134. What are the terms upon which the leases are generally held? Is. a ton royalty on all cane grown.

9135. Under the present leases you have no security of tenure, and you do not know whether they can be continued? No; very few of them.

9136. Have you given any thought to the deportation of kaukas at the end of this year? No.

9137. Have you considered any scheme by which white labour may be introduced to settle in the district in the future, so that you can have something to draw from? The district is too small.

9138. And too isolated? Yes, too isolated.

9139. Do you think you will get a good class of labourers here if you cannot get them to settle? No.

9140. You cannot induce them to come here without that? We will have to pay higher prices every year than the Southern men, in order to attract them here.

9141. You will get the ordinary number you require for cultivating purposes by paying higher wages than are paid in the South? We may get 25 or 30 per cent. permanently, but no more. There will be five or six months in the year when there is no other employment to fall back on except mining, and if they are successful in mining they will not come back to the coast sugar-growing.

9142. Taking it by and large, are you likely with your wages to attract men from the mining districts, as they have done in Mackay? Very probably; but they are the wrong class of men. Miners do

8. Archbold.
4 May, 1906. not like the sugar work because it is longer hours than mining. Then in mining they have no boss, as when they are working over the ranges they work on their own. But in the sugar industry they are under a boss, and they have to work longer hours.
9143. But the other is the more certain money? They do not consider that. Only a small percentage of them consider that.
9144. You do not look forward with fear to the future if you offer these wages? We have got to see if we can afford to pay these wages. If we cannot afford to pay these wages, then the industry must go down here. Several of the farmers of this district have recently taken up land at the Burdekin, and they intend to leave this district and go there.
9145. Are their farms abandoned now? No; their leases will fall in this year and next year. They are holding on to their farms just at present.
9146. *By Mr. Nielson:* But perhaps the terms of their leases may have something to do with it? No; some who had long leases have sold out.
9147. *By the Chairman:* Do you know anything about the Daintree country? Yes.
9148. Suppose these lands which are now locked up were made available for settlement, would they be availed of by this district? Not unless there was some communication established. The danger is that it is such an isolated place.
9149. How far is it? It is 15 or 20 miles by land and it is a long way up the river.
9150. Cannot you imagine a number of married men settled on the small areas and riding backwards and forwards and spending portion of their time at their homes with their families? I do not think it will work satisfactorily because if they were settled there they would have to produce crops of some description, and it is very probable that those crops would require reaping and looking after just at the same time as we would require the men to work for us.
9151. That would be so small a matter that you could join together and allow one man to go home and work and the rest could stop? That is very theoretical, but not practical.
9152. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you any experience of the South? I come from Victoria.
9153. I mean South Queensland? No.
9154. Are you not aware that men there go out and help each other like that? They do it here too, but we have no back country.
9155. Suppose you had the country to settle men on, you would have the men to go on to it? It would help us a little, but not much. From my experience of tropical agriculture a man will not come off his farm to work for anybody else.
9156. *By the Chairman:* I was thinking of a man settled on a few acres where he could grow sweet potatoes and pumpkins and such like articles which his family would consume? They do not care much about sweet potatoes. As a rule it is not very satisfactory. Tropical agriculture is altogether different to what it is further South.
9157. It would help the flour bag—I remember when it was said they could not grow vegetables on the Darling Downs, but they do it now? There are so many pests against all crops in the North, and it is far harder work to look after a garden than it is down South.
9158. Then you have no hope for the future? No; none at all.
9159. *By Mr. Paget:* Not in that respect? No; not in that respect.
9160. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything else you wish to say? It may be out of place, but I should say that we should go in for a high protective duty.
9161. We cannot go into that—You think the bounty must continue, or that you must have protection in some way? Yes.

JOHN RICHARD EDMONDS, Missionary, examined:

- J. R. Edmonds.
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9163. What mission are you connected with? The Queensland Kanaka Mission, of which Miss Young, of Fairymead, is the superintendent.
9164. How many "boys" are connected with your mission here? Fully 100 now.
9165. Do they belong to both the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands? Yes. About seventy go to school on Sunday.
9166. Do they attend church? Yes.
9167. Are any of them married? A few are.
9168. Have they got families? Yes.
9169. Do the children attend the State school? Some of them do.
9170. What is the feeling of the islanders with respect to compulsory deportation? They prefer to stay in Queensland as a rule. Some of them want to go home, but not till after the New Year. Those who are willing to go home prefer to do so when they like.
9171. A number of them interviewed the Commission this morning, and said that they wanted to go home; but, upon closer inquiry, there were only four who said they were prepared to go, and then only if a vessel came to Cairns? I have made a rough estimate, and I think that half are prepared to go home after Christmas, and the other half want to stay if they will be permitted to do so.
9172. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you aware that a number of the islanders are unemployed at present? I should say there are fifty or sixty unemployed in Mosman.
9173. Why is that? One reason is because they consider the wages offered are too low.
9174. We have it in evidence that the wages offered range from 10s. to 15s. a week and found? Yes. Some "boys" came up from Bundaberg, and twelve signed on at 10s. a week and found. They have signed on till Christmas.
9175. *By the Chairman:* Are they expecting more than the wages that are offered them? Some of them are. It would be a hard job to satisfy some of them.
9176. *By Mr. Paget:* Are the unemployed islanders in want? Not many of them. They seem to have plenty to eat. They are living on what they have earned in the past.
9177. They are taking a spell, as a matter of fact? I suppose so. A few are signing on.
9178. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know any who are "hard up"? None have come to me in need of food or clothes, though there may be a very few of such cases.

9179. Have there been any "boys" here within the last six months who wanted to go home? There have been some who would like to have gone home, but they would have had to go to Bundaberg to get a ship. If a vessel came to Port Douglas, they would go. ● Of course, it is a heavy expense to go to Bundaberg from here.

9180. Do you know any "boys" who would have gone but for the expense of the passage to Bundaberg? Yes.

9181. *By Mr. Paget*: Could you say how many? I should say there are twenty or thirty who would have gone if a boat had come to Port Douglas.

9182. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have the "boys" who are at present out of employment, any chance of getting work? I do not think so. The farmers are naturally cautious about taking them on, as they will have to pay for their passages at the expiration of their terms.

9183. Generally speaking, have they enough money to keep themselves for two or three months? Some of them have and some of them have not.

9184. If a vessel called here soon, would some of them avail themselves of the opportunity of going home? I am quite sure they would. ● Of course, some boats do not go to the New Hebrides, and others do not go to the Solomons.

9185. If a boat going to both groups came here? I am quite certain a large number would be prepared to go home.

9186. Are there any outside influences at work to induce the islanders to remain about the district, although they are not able to get work? I do not think so. I would encourage them to go home if they cared to go.

9187. I do not mean your influence? I do not think there are any outside influences at work.

9188. Are there any influences at work to induce the "boys" to contemplate resistance to deportation? Not so far as I know.

9189. Do the "boys" generally understand that they have to go home after this year? Yes.

9190. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you given any consideration to the question of the deportation of the islanders? I have considered it a little. I saw something in the Press about sending the "boys" to New Guinea. I really do not think that would work, because many of them have their own plantations and wives and children on their own islands. Many of them would resent being sent to another place, and some would not go.

9191. But, under the Polynesian Act, they must be returned to the "passages" from which they were recruited? That is quite right.

9192. Have you given any consideration to the question of how 6,000 islanders can be sent to their homes after the end of this year without any inhumanity? I really could not say how it should be done.

9193. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you been in the islands at all? No.

9194. *By the Chairman*: A number of "boys" at the Proserpine want to be allowed to settle on some Crown lands or reserves—Have you heard anything of that kind mooted among the "boys" here? No; but if any land were available, I am sure a number of them would be prepared to settle down.

9195. *By Mr. Paget*: Could you say how many "boys" are settled on the land in this district? I could not say. There are a few here and there.

9196. What are they growing? Cane and vegetables.

WILLIAM TREVOR FRANCIS, Secretary to the Mossman Branch of the Sugar Workers' Union, examined:

9197. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A clerk.

9198. I understand you are appearing before us in a certain capacity? I appear as the secretary of the Mossman branch of the Sugar Workers' Union.

9199. How long has your union been in existence? About nine months.

9200. How many members are there? Seventy-four.

9201. *By Mr. Paget*: Is the membership strictly confined to field hands, or does it comprise field and mill workers? Field and mill workers.

9202. What number of field and mill hands would probably be employed in the mill and the fields in this district during the crushing season? I should say about 300.

9203. *By Mr. Nielson*: Was that the number employed last season? Yes.

9204. *By the Chairman*: Is the number increasing? It has been increasing for the last three years.

9205. Is it still increasing? Yes.

9206. What do you estimate will be required during the coming crushing season? Well, I should say somewhere about 350.

9207. After the expiration of this year, when kanakas can be no longer employed, what number of white men will be required in their places? I cannot say.

9208. Surely you have formed some estimate? No; I have not. I have only lately been appointed secretary, and I have not had the opportunity of going as fully into the matter as I should like to have done.

9209. You are aware that several gangs have signed on to come up from the South this year? Yes.

9210. That shows that the rates are satisfactory? Not at all.

9211. How is that? Well, the agreement they adopted at the last meeting is a sort of stand and deliver business, and the workers had nothing to do with it.

9212. *By Mr. Paget*: Have the men who agreed to work here signed the agreement? I believe so. They signed the mill agreement. The mill company has not approached the sugar-workers at all. They simply suited themselves.

9213. Did the sugar workers approach the mill management? No; and the mill company did not approach the Sugar Workers' Union.

9214. Well, it was a kind of mutual stand-off business? Exactly.

9215. *By the Chairman*: You can give us evidence on that point? I have a statement here I would like to put in.

9216. The first paragraph in this statement is outside the scope of our inquiry; but you can read that part relating to labour? There has been a great cry about the shortage of labour, but that is not a fact. At the beginning of the year there was a rush to register, and the growers began to be hysterically

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anxious about the bonus. In February there was a lot of unemployed in this district, and in March I am confident that there were over 150 men available for employment in any capacity. Men have been brought constantly from the South ever since. Some stayed, but many have gone, and all are more or less discontented. The men complained of misrepresentation on the part of the agents employed, who are all favourites of the directorate going on holiday, and paid agents. It appears to me that the policy of the company within the past two years—

9217. That is not within the scope of the Commission—it is not within the scope of this inquiry to discuss the policy of the company or anybody else? I submit that it has to do with the question. I am showing what has been done in the past.

9218. That does not concern us, as we are not going into the question of what was done in the past, but what labour will be necessary in the future? Well, here is something in the *Worker*.

9219. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think there will be sufficient men here to harvest the coming crop? **Decidedly.**

9220. Do you think there will be more men wanted in future than there are here this year? **Certainly.**

9221. Do you think there will be sufficient men? I see no reason to doubt it.

9222. Do you see any reason for anyone else to doubt it? **No.**

9223. Are there men enough in this district to do next year's work? **No.**

9224. Then where will they come from? **Floating population.**

9225. Are the wages offering sufficient to induce them to come here? **No. There are no wages offering. It is contract work.**

9226. Are the rates for cutting cane good? The rates for cutting cane are good, but the rates for trashing are rotten.

9227. *By Mr. Paget*: That printed list you see showing the rates has been given to us? That is perfectly fair for cutting only.

9228. *By the Chairman*: Is 17s. 6d. an acre not fair for trashing? **No.**

9229. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would not the cost of trashing follow the cost of cutting? **Yes; but the average crop is 13 tons to the acre, and anybody at all conversant with cane-growing knows what that means.**

9230. In what way? It means that a man will barely make tucker at it. It is a good man who will cut 1½ tons in a day.

9231. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you ever done any of that work yourself? **Yes.**

9232. Of late years? **Twenty-five years ago, on the Lower Burdekin.**

9233. Not of late then? **No; but I have done the work myself, and I know what I am talking about.**

9234. You do not take any exception, as the representative of the Sugar Workers' Union, to the rates offered for harvesting by contract? **No.**

9235. You take exception to the rate offered by the farmers for cultivation labour? **I do.**

9236. We have evidence that they are giving 2s. a week and found? In the Prosperpine district they are giving 32s. 6d. and found.

9237. We did not get such evidence there? I had it from a newspaper report, though, of course, that is not always reliable.

9238. In the off season the wage is 30s. a week and find themselves, or 20s. a week and found—that is the evidence which we got? I saw it in a newspaper.

9239. *By the Chairman*: Well, it must have been a misprint? I do not think so.

9240. Then it is an inaccuracy, because it was never stated in evidence? I saw it in the paper there.

9241. *By Mr. Paget*: In a good season if a farmer gets hold of a good man he sometimes gives him 2s. 6d. a week extra? I gathered from the report that that was the general rate.

9242. What man said it? I saw it in the *Mossman Guardian*.

9243. Mr. Boyle, who represented the workers, said that they wanted 20s. a week and found? **Yes.**

9244. *By the Chairman*: You have been misled—Do you think 30s. a week and find yourself is as good as 20s. a week and found? Men who are unemployed are willing to take anything to get work.

9245. *By Mr. Paget*: This man represented the workers of that district, and he said they would much rather have 20s. a week and found, than 30s. a week and find themselves? **Yes; and I agree with that.**

9246. They wanted to get paid for every day wet or dry—The evidence this morning showed that the wage here was 25s. a week and found, and you say it is not enough? They do not get paid for wet days here.

9247. Your union does not approve of the weekly rate of wages offered by the farmers? **No. The men would rather have a weekly wage, but they want 30s. a week and found.**

9248. *By the Chairman*: That is for the crushing season? **Yes.**

9249. What do they want for the off season? **25s. a week, and found.**

9250. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would that be for every day, wet or dry? That I am not prepared to say, as I have not had time to go into the question enough. There are certain cases where it would be rather a hardship for an employer to keep his men doing nothing and eating their heads off.

9251. *By Mr. Paget*: And paying them all the time? **Yes; and paying them at the same time. I think there would be no difficulty in finding the men employment during the off season. They could be given woodcutting to do. At present the wood is being cut by the Hindoos in contravention of the Act. I complained twice in writing to the inspector about it.**

9252. Were any steps taken to put a stop to it? I do not know. Mr. Staines might have done it.

9253. *By the Chairman*: Did it cease? I could not say. I was living in the town, but I am under the impression that it did not cease until the work ceased.

9254. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you tell us where white labour can be obtained after this year? **Yes.**

9255. Do you think there is sufficient floating population in the State to fill the gap that will be created by the withdrawal of the Pacific Islanders? **No.**

9256. Do you think there is sufficient elsewhere within the Commonwealth? **There is a sufficiency of floating labour, but it is not all reliable.**

9257. *By Mr. Nielson*: What is the cause of the unreliability? **Drink principally.**

9258. Has your union any rules? **Yes.**

9259. Has it any by-law prescribing qualifications for membership? **No. So long as a man is a worker he is entitled to become a member.**

9260. Can a man lose his membership for any other reason than neglect to pay his contributions? **Not at present.**

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9261. Is it not advisable to consider whether men who are totally unreliable through intemperate habits should not lose their membership? That is under consideration now; and, if you had sat next week, I might have been able to tell you something about it. It is under the consideration of this branch of the union, at any rate.

9262. *By Mr. Paget:* You did not reply to my question regarding the supply of labour for the sugar industry next year—Where can the deficiency that will exist next year be supplied from? By a labour bureau formed by the union itself.

9263. Not a Government Labour Bureau? No; simply a district bureau. That is the present idea of the union.

9264. How can they supply the deficiency if there are no men available? They will be in touch with other branches of the union.

9265. I am speaking of the industry as a whole? I am speaking of the industry as applied to Queensland. It will work just the same as other labourers' agencies which are formed in Townsville and other large towns in the South. The union will have certain men on its books whom it can guarantee; and the farmers, instead of sending South and publishing lying reports like there are in this report that I hold in my hand, can be supplied with labour by a recognised body; and, if labour is not available, they will receive due notice to that effect.

9266. It has been suggested to us that a system of references would be of great assistance to the men—Has your union considered that question? Not at all; and, personally, I think a reference is not worth anything. I have been in Queensland for twenty-eight years and have never taken a reference from a man. Most references are bogus.

9267. You do not think it would assist a good man to get work if he had a reference from his last employer? Not a bit. If his last employer was an honest man, and would give an honest reference, it would be a different thing, but they very seldom do that.

9268. *By Mr. Nielson:* If a man had a bad reference, would he be likely to produce it? No. If a man wants a reference it will only cost him a 2d. stamp to get one.

9269. *By Mr. Paget:* The system of discharges prevails amongst seamen? That is a very different thing. With regard to social conditions, I wish to say that they are bad. There is absolutely no relaxation or amusement but by going to public-houses. In other places there are some forms of rational amusement, but here there are absolutely none. Lately, men have been almost driven to drink by scarcity of work. One of the directors has erected a hotel alongside the mill gates.

9270. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have not the men got any sporting clubs? They have a club, but they are rather "snide" shows, got up for the benefit of a few people who want to make money out of them. It is not sport.

9271. Could not the men form cricket and football clubs? They could, but they will not. They did it in a half-hearted way, but the employers took no interest in them.

9272. It is not far to the coast—Cannot the men go fishing on Sundays? Yes; but it costs something to go there.

9273. How far is it? 12 or 14 miles.

9274. I thought it was only 3 miles in a direct line? That is so; but if a man has been working twelve hours every day, he does not want to "pad the hoof" down to the beach to amuse himself. He wants a camp.

9275. Unfortunately, some men will walk twice that distance to a public-house? I do not think they will. They have only to walk to the mill gate here.

9276. They do it in other districts? It is very similar to the Mulgrave, where there are two hotels just beside the mill gates.

9277. What is the cost of living in this district? I have lived on about 5s. a week for the last twelve months, but other people might object to doing that.

9278. What is the cost of the ordinary necessities of life? Meat is at a prohibitive price—5½d. and 6d. a lb.

9279. What is the price of bread? 4d. a loaf.

9280. *By the Chairman:* I understand the gangs are getting it for 3d.? They are getting it for 3½d., under a new arrangement made within the last three days, on condition that they deal with the Co-operative Butchering Company.

9281. *By Mr. Nielson:* I am told the price of meat is 4d. a lb.? 4½d. to shareholders only. Three years ago beef could be bought for 3d. a lb.

9282. What are the prices for ordinary stores, such as the men use in camps? Groceries are about 7 per cent dearer than they are in Cairns. Tobacco and things like that are the same price. Potatoes are dearer than in Cairns. The floating population of this district ranges generally from about forty in the off season, to about eighty during the crushing. This year the unemployed number fully 100.

9283. Where are they? Camped all over the country. It would take a man a day's ride to see them. They are in the scrubs and on banks of creeks, all over the place. A decent man will not come into town except to go to the mill for a job.

RICHARD AUGUSTINE DONNELLY, Canoe Farmer, examined:

9284. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your farm? 430 acres.

9285. How much did you cut last year? 1,600 tons.

9286. And was that cut with white or coloured labour? Coloured labour.

9287. *By Mr. Paget:* The mill gang? Yes.

9288. *By the Chairman:* You can give us your evidence straight ahead? Well, to start with, if I am in order I would like to read a clause in our articles on the white and coloured labour question. No. 25 of our articles reads as follows:—

The directors may decline to register any transfer of shares or stock upon which the company has a lien, or in respect of which default has been made, and no deed shall be accepted from any Chinaman, whether naturalised or not, or from any Asiatic or other coloured alien, or any shares be transferred to any Chinaman, whether naturalised or not, or to any Asiatic or other coloured aliens, and the directors may refuse to register a transfer without assigning any reason therefor.

That shows that before we had any labour legislation whatever on the subject we started to deal with this coloured labour question.

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Donnelly.

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9289. You always tried to encourage them to employ Europeans? Yes. The question is the amount of labour you want to get. I have registered about 2,000 tons myself, and in another block in which I have an interest there is about 1,800 tons, and it is all registered. The experience I have had in the industry, and with my knowledge of the labour in this district both as a grower and one of the directors of the mill, is that we have not got the right class of labour in the North, and under the circumstances I do not expect that we shall get it.

9290. *By Mr. Paget:* Not even with these gangs? There has been a union started here, which is a union of unemployed. None of our mill gangs have gone into the union, and the union is represented to-day by a secretary who has been living on aliens and Asiatics.

9291. You think the union may interfere with the working of the gangs? Yes. It is compulsory for us to fall into line with the Act, and we got these workers up from the South. The union consists of all the gather-ups from the North; but the men earning wages outside the union will not join them, and they have all willingly signed the agreements. At a meeting of the Mossman cane-growers there were fifty-three cane-growers present, and they agreed that in the off season the wages should be 25s. a week and found, and in the crushing season 30s. a week and found; or 42s. a week, and let them find themselves. That was the first resolution carried. When that got into print, some of the cane-growers down South said that we were taking the right step to enter the Bankruptcy Court. But we are satisfied that we shall have to pay high wages to induce men to come to this district, as the men will not live in this climate. Then there is another thing. At the back of this range is a district full of minerals, and if a rush broke out, I would think very little of the men who would not leave here and go to the rush.

9292. *By Mr. Nielson:* Most of the farmers would go, too? Yes. We are the farthest North of any sugar district, and we have one of the worst climates.

9293. *By Mr. Paget:* If there was a rush to the mineral fields, would not the men leave the other sugar districts as well? We have the O.K. Mine and others, and we might have another O.K. at the back of this range here.

9294. It would be a good thing for the district—You are quite aware that when Charters Towers broke out all the men left Mackay in the crushing season? But legislation afterwards protected them. What are we to do if a rush breaks out, and there is a failure of labour? The common sense of Australia will eventually solve the thing, but what are we to do in the meantime?

9295. What suggestion do you make? To give two years for the deportation of the kanakas, and by that time the greater part of the kanakas will have left.

9296. And register for white labour? Yes.

9297. Where do you expect to get your white labour? Amend the Immigration Restriction Act and get them from Great Britain.

9298. *By Mr. Nielson:* In what way do you want it amended? To allow men to come in under contract.

9299. But you have got that now? But it is all in the hands of the Minister, and we have got no faith in him. The Federal Government has done so many unreasonable things, and we have not got much reliance in them, and the Queensland members have not either.

9300. If you are short of labour yourself, is it not worth a 2d. stamp to write to the Minister to get a permit to bring out labour? Yes.

9301. That is all you need to do? Will they allow us to get them in under contract?

9302. *By Mr. Paget:* If the Minister thinks there is not sufficient labour in the Commonwealth he will. But from our experience of Ministers they do not take the opinion of those who earn their bread and butter from it, but of agitators. I have the greatest respect for the honest worker, but I object to those men who live on the honest worker. The hard grafter will always give you an honest deal.

9303. *By the Chairman:* You think two years should be given for the deportation? Yes.

9304. And you approve of immigration? Yes; and a continuation of the bonus.

9305. *By Mr. Paget:* You think they are necessary to enable you to pay good wages? Yes.

9306. Do you not think that sufficient white labour will be available in the Commonwealth? I do not think so with the amount of labour taken up to build railways and the good times Australia is looking forward to. When the Etheridge and Cloncurry railways are started I suppose there will be three men employed for every one that is employed now, and I do not think it will be possible to get sufficient labour for the canefields in 1907.

9307. *By the Chairman:* Can you devise any means to make the men stop here? None whatever.

9308. Do you think that, establishing such a place as a reading-room, where the men could get the daily papers, it would make them feel more at home and keep them away from the public-houses? I do not think so, because they can become subscribers to the school of arts for 5s., and they will not join. If I thought it would do any good, I would advocate it as a director of the mill.

9309. *By Mr. Nielson:* They do it in Southern places? But the labourers up here do not seem to like the school of arts. They are more civilised and they have a better climate down South than they have up North.

9310. They say they come here for higher wages? We are offering wages which are very risky. If there is a drop of £1 per ton in sugar, we shall not be able to pay the wages. It seems all very well on paper, but there are grubs and other things to contend with. I lost 1,000 tons the year before last; last year I lost 300 tons, and this year I will lose 500 or 600 tons. There are a lot of "boys" going about now who cannot get work, as no one will employ them owing to the extra passage money which will have to be paid by the last employer.

9311. You do not believe that the liability for another £2 of their passages is going to prevent men from employing kanakas? If we engage a "boy" for three months we have to give him 15s. a week, and then pay this extra passage-money and his fare to Bundaberg, which amounts to £6 altogether, and we cannot afford that.

9312. Why is that? Because you taught them to be trade unionists.

9313. *By the Chairman:* You cannot afford to pay that? No. We reckon it will cost £6 to keep the "boy" until he gets to Bundaberg.

9314. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you know anything about the kanakas in this district? Yes.

9315. Are many of them settling down on the land? There are some on the various creeks. There is one naturalised British subject, and there are two on Daintree.

9316. Are many of these islanders married to aboriginal women? None of them are married to aboriginal women. Another thing I would like to point out is that we have not one white woman married to a kanaka. It seems that we are the only white place in Australia where they have not tried to breed piebalds.

R. A.
Donnelly.

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9317. This is not the only place—What about the deportation of kanakas; do you know anything about the conditions on the islands? Only from what I have heard from the "boys," and a great many of them are frightened to go home.

9318. *By the Chairman:* We have got a lot of information from people who are conversant with the conditions in the islands? Yes. I would like to add that one of the previous witnesses mentioned about the shortage of cane. The mill sustained a great loss through the shortage of cane. We give them every chance to get in their cane, but there is still a shortage.

9319. *By Mr. Payet:* You are co-operative shareholders? Yes.

9320. The Sugar-workers' Union has just been started? Yes; about four weeks. I wish to point out that the price of beef to the gangs is 4d. per lb., and bread is 3d. to them, with a likelihood of the 2-lb. loaf being reduced to 3d. Before I went South, a month ago, we had arranged with the Co-operative Company to supply the men with cheap rations, and the same with the stores.

9321. *By Mr. Nielson:* What is the cost per week of keeping men in this district? The men are entirely satisfied with the way they are kept by the mill company. We pay a cook 15s. a day, seven days a week. He is paid next to the general manager.

9322. *By the Chairman:* Does he find his own assistants? No; we have to find his assistants. It costs about 8s. a week for the men in the mill, and 10s. a week for the officers' quarters. In regard to the field hands, it fluctuates according to the number of men in the gangs; the smaller the number the higher the price on account of waste. It is a pity none of the employees have attended to give evidence, because they are entirely satisfied with the rations provided.

RICHARD OWEN JONES, Cane Farmer, examined:

9323. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer.

R. O. Jones.

9324. What is the area of your farm? I own about 1,800 acres.

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9325. How much is under cane? About 800 acres.

9326. That is probably nearly all that is fit for canegrowing? I have about 300 acres more.

9327. What did you cut last year? Roughly, 3,000 tons that I cultivated myself. Some of my land is leased.

9328. Did you cut your crop by white or black labour? Black labour.

9329. Are you registered at all? I am registered for 48 acres.

9330. Why did you not register more? I registered 48 acres of extra land. I might have registered another 200 acres, but I had engaged a number of Hindoos last year for two years, which includes this year's harvest.

9331. What is your opinion about white labour for the future? With the existing labour it is an impossibility to look forward more than from year to year. I have been here for twenty-nine years, and I have been the chief employer in farming with all colours. The Mo-so-man was opened up by coloured labour, which made it possible for white men to succeed.

9332. Do you think there is a fair prospect of success in the future, so long as the bonus is continued? Yes; so long as the bonus is continued equally to Victorians to grow beet sugar and to the people of Northern New South Wales and Southern Queensland to grow cane sugar by their natural labour. This is the most northerly place where sugar is grown in Queensland, and I think that the matter in hand affects the people north of Mackay principally. South of Mackay they have the population; we have not. They have a climate that we have not, and it is possible for them, but impossible for us, to carry on with white labour. I have spent the best years of my life here, and have done hoing side by side with the best of them, but I cannot do it now. I consider that the best of my countrymen who put in six or seven years here are pretty well on the shelf as regards manual labour in the field. I would like you to be here in January, February, and March.

9333. You think the climate is entirely unsuited to white labour? It is too enervating. A strong man will do well for five or six years, but he cannot continue.

9334. You think it is hopeless to think of settling white men permanently here? I think the present legislation is forcing unnatural labour and unnatural conditions upon North Queensland. The natural habitat of the sugar industry is north of Mackay. Districts where frost kills cane in winter time should not be considered places where tropical agriculture can be carried on. North of Mackay it becomes tropical agriculture, and a dividing line should be drawn between the two. Where frost kills cane you can go in for sub-tropical agriculture, but north of that line it is impossible to get a white population to engage in the laborious work of the fields continuously.

9335. Is there anything else you wish to say? Mr. Staines, our inspector, asked me to ascertain the wishes of my "boys" with respect to deportation. Outside of the harvesting season I employ all the year round twelve kanakas and twelve white men. I put no leading questions to the "boys," but merely asked them if they were willing to go home at the end of the year. The first one I called up said that he did not want to go. When I asked him, "Why?" he said, "Me married, and me ben in this country twenty-five years." The other eleven said they did not want to go home, and, when asked for a reason, they said they would go home by and by, when they liked.

9336. The "boys" we saw this morning want to choose their own time, too? A number of them have family ties. One "boy" is legally married in the Church of England to an aboriginal woman.

ACKAR, a Native of Vanua Lava Island, examined:

9337. *By the Chairman:* What is it you wish to say? The "boys" have told me to say that we want to go home when we wish to. Some of us wish to stay longer. We want to be free labourers, and do any work we can get. We don't want contract. We say that as we do the same work that Hindoos and white men do we should get the same wages as them.

Akar.

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9338. You want to be paid the same wages as the white man or the Hindoo? Yes.

9339. Anything more you wish to say? No.

(Port Douglas.)

FRIDAY, 4 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.
MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

ARTHUR STAINES, Inspector of Pacific Islanders, examined:

- A. Staines. 9340. *By the Chairman:* You have prepared a tabulated statement regarding the Pacific Islanders in this district? Yes.
- 4 May, 1906. 9341. How many are there in the district? The total number of employed and unemployed islanders is 420—280 employed and 140 unemployed.
9342. *By Mr. Paget:* That includes the Port Douglas and Mossman districts? Yes.
9343. There is only one sugar mill in the district? Yes.
9344. Can you say how long those who are unemployed have been out of work? They range from a couple of weeks to about six months.
9345. Are you the officer in charge of the Labour Bureau here? The clerks of petty sessions are the officers in charge.
9346. Has the bureau been made use of to any extent by employers or by themen? The only time it has been used, so far as I am concerned, was when on one occasion the officer in charge of the bureau in Townsville wrote to me saying that there was a great number of unemployed there, and asking if I could manage to get employment for them. I inquired at the mill and at about five other places where I thought men might be wanted, and the mill at once offered to take twenty men, and sent down for them, and I think they also paid their passages, the amount to be deducted afterwards from the earnings of the men. The mill company is always ready to give assistance when I apply to them in that way.
9347. Do the farmers generally make any use of the bureau? No. I think they have an arrangement with the mill company to procure most of their labour.
9348. Do the unemployed not register with you? If they registered at Mossman, they would do so with the officer in charge of the police, who is acting clerk of petty sessions for the district. I am only in charge of the bureau at Port Douglas; but, as Inspector of Pacific Islanders, my district comprises the Mossman.
9349. *By the Chairman:* Can you give any reason for a number of islanders being out of employment? It is on account of white labour superseding island labour. In some cases the islanders do not want to work, and in other cases they want a higher wage than the farmers are now offering. I think the current rate now is 9s. or 10s. a week.
9350. Is the uncertainty with respect to the liability of the employer to pay the extra passage money a reason? I think so. Some employers say they do not think it fair that they should be asked to pay the extra amount, and consequently they want to reduce the islanders' wages to make up the difference.
9351. If that matter was settled, some of the islanders might be re-engaged for six months? I am almost sure some of them would be.
9352. *By Mr. Paget:* Were any of the islanders' agreements broken at the beginning of this year by mutual consent? Yes. At the beginning of January, I think the mill broke twenty-eight or thirty. I asked the islanders if they wanted to break the agreements, and they said "Yes." I asked them three times, and they gave the same answer each time.
9353. Were these islanders compensated for breaking the agreements? No.
9354. They were just paid the wages to date? That is all. I wired to the Immigration Agent for certain information because I saw that certain employers were going to follow suit, and I absolutely refused to break the agreements until I got a wire from the Immigration Agent.
9355. That was about what date? It was about the end of January. On the 13th of January I sent the following telegram to the Immigration Agent: "Some islanders' agreements cancelled. Mutual consent take advantage bounty according to Commonwealth's present advice. General anxiety employers to cancel. Urgently reply shall I do so." This was sent urgent.
9356. The date for registration was the 20th January? No, the 21st January.
9357. What was the reply to that telegram? I got a telegram in reply to hold it over until the Immigration Agent saw the Minister. I waited for three days, and then I got a reply to say that the full wages must be paid to the end of the agreement until he saw the Minister. I then got a reply to take half the balance of the wages to the end of the agreement.
9358. As compensation? Yes.
9359. Were any of the agreements of the islanders broken after the date on which they were to receive compensation? Yes; G. W. Muntz broke some, and the islanders agreed to take half the wages to the end of the term of their agreement.
9360. Were there many of those islanders? Mr. Muntz, had four, and there might have been three or four others.
9361. There were very few? Yes; very few.
9362. Have you any experience of the South Sea Islands? No.
9363. Have you had any experience of islanders here? Since I was a boy I have been connected with the islanders. My father used to keep a kanaka store in Mackay, and I have known the islanders since I was a boy.
9364. Have you considered the matter of the deportation of the islanders? I have; but not officially.
9365. You have 420 islanders in this district? Yes.
9366. At the end of this year the Act says that they may be deported? Yes.
9367. Have you considered how they may be deported from this district? I suggested to the Immigration Agent that, if the Act is to be carried out in its entirety, ships should be chartered by the Government to take them over.
9368. Do you think all the ships should come up to Port Douglas? I do not say that. My idea is that they should come to the Northern ports first, and then work down the coast, because if they start in the North they can easily be filled up in the Southern ports; but, if they get filled up in the Southern ports for a start, there is practically no chance of the Northern ones getting away.

9369. *By the Chairman*: That is a good idea; it would be a mistake to start down South first in all cases, because they would not know how much room to leave? Yes.
9370. *By Mr. Paget*: The reason they start in the South and come North afterwards is that they have a better passage and it is better sailing for them? I understand that.
9371. Have you given any consideration as to whether there is a possibility of a shortage in the food supply if large numbers of islanders are returned in two or three ships as against the present system? I think that when you get a number of islanders going to a new place there would be a shortage in the food supply, just in the same way as we used to read about in the convict days. We were told that when all the convict ships went to Port Jackson there was a shortage of food among the convicts. There is one matter that I thought about in connection with the islanders, and that is, that a colour line might be drawn so as to exclude the different towns where black labour is employed.
9372. To exclude the different sugar districts? Yes. I think the first line should be drawn south of Mackay, and black labour should not be employed further south than that. Then, at different periods of a year each, the colour line should be drawn south of Ayr, then Townsville, then Ingham, then Cairns, and then Port Douglas.
9373. *By the Chairman*: That would give you five years? Yes; five or six years. That would allow time for white labour to come up and settle in the North. So far as the white labour is concerned, if a good number came up here in the sugar season there might be a great number of unemployed in the off season.
9374. Have you any suggestion to make as to the better working of the Labour Bureau? I think the Labour Bureau is one of the most useful matters to consider in the whole of the departments, because if a wire were sent up you would get from each bureau the number they each require. It might be worked on a better principle than it is at the present time. There is too much uncertainty about it at present. Men come and register, and next day you might get work for them, but they are out of the district.

(Cairns.)

MONDAY, 7 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) |

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

PHILIP GEORGE ELLIS, Labourer and Representative of Sugar-workers' Union, examined:

9375. *By the Chairman*: Do you appear here in a representative capacity? Yes. I am a worker, and I represent the Sugar-workers' Union.
9376. You are authorised by the union to represent them? Yes.
9377. How long has that union been in existence? About eighteen months.
9378. And what number of members are on the roll? Between 300 and 400.
9379. Are they all financial members? Yes.
9380. Your union has held a meeting in anticipation of the visit of the Sugar Commission? Yes, we held a meeting last Sunday.
9381. I suppose certain resolutions were arrived at in connection with the evidence you are to give? There were no resolutions passed.
9382. You had better give us your evidence in your own way, and we will question you afterwards? What would you like me to speak on?
9383. One of the subjects which will be of interest to you is as to whether there is a sufficiency of white labour in the district to replace the kanakas who will be withdrawn, and, if not, by what means can that white labour be introduced?—I will ask you, first of all, will there be sufficient white labour in the district when the kanakas go? Yes. There is plenty of labour in the district now, and they cannot get a job. There are hundreds of men who cannot get a job.
9384. Do you know how many kanakas there are in this district? No; I do not.
9385. Then how can you say that there is a sufficiency of labour? Because we know the numbers of men who come up here in the crushing season looking for work, and who cannot get it.
9386. Past crushing seasons? Yes.
9387. Do you anticipate that those men will come back again next crushing season? A good many of them, and as regards those who do not come others will come in their places.
9388. *By Mr. Paget*: From where do they come? From the West, the North, and all over the place.
9389. Are they western workers or prospectors, or what? They are prospectors, navvies, western workers, farm labourers, tradesmen, and all classes of workers. They all try a season first.
9390. *By the Chairman*: Will there be sufficient material to make the trial this year? Yes. I have spoken to many of my mates, and they say that wherever they go they find hundreds of men who cannot get a job.
9391. Can you tell us how many such men there are in the district? I believe you can get a couple of hundred men now easily, and the season is not on yet. They are camped all over the place waiting for work, and there is no work for them. I believe there are a great crowd of men at the Mulgrave waiting for work now. There were 150 men camped there a few weeks ago.
9392. We will see them there when we go there? Our secretary is out there waiting for you. I do not think there will be any difficulty in getting sufficient men if you give them fair wages, fair accommodation, and fair hours.
9393. Has your union decided what will be a fair wage? Yes.

- P. G. Ellis. 9394. What has your union decided will be a fair wage for ordinary field hands in the slack season? 25s. a week and found.
- 7 May, 1906. 9395. That will be for the ordinary men doing field labour? Yes, for chipping and trashing; that is, if they get fair hours and fair accommodation.
9396. *By Mr. Paget*: That is the price for planting, too? Yes; also planting.
9397. *By the Chairman*: What have you decided as the rate for cutting? We have decided on 6s. per day for cutting.
9398. *By Mr. Nielson*: And found? Yes; certainly.
9399. *By the Chairman*: As to the hours, what do you call fair hours? If we give them nine hours a day we are giving them a fair thing. We recognise that farming is different to other occupations.
9400. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many hours a week? Fifty-four hours a week.
9401. Do you not knock off at 4 o'clock on Saturday? If we knock off at 4 o'clock on Saturdays we will make it up during the week. We are prepared to give them fifty-four hours a week.
- The Chairman*: What about accommodation?
- Mr. Nielson*: That ought to be settled by the Act.
9402. *The Chairman*: The Act does not apply to small growers. [*To Witness*]: Do the men who work for the small farmers carry their own tents? A lot of men carry tents, but there are a number who have not got them. I believe that all the farmers intend to put up suitable accommodation for the men. Those who cannot put up accommodation this year certainly intend to get tents. The men are not particular about the tents so long as they get a fair thing in other ways.
9403. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do the men as a rule object to camp in tents? No, not if they can get other things that are suitable, such as fair tucker and fair wages.
9404. *By the Chairman*: Are the men in this district given a sum of money in place of having rations found for them? This is the first time it has been done. It was done this year and the men were given wages to find themselves.
9405. *By Mr. Nielson*: What did they offer? Some got 6s. and some 7s. a day. Then others are offered 25s. a week and tucker, but most of the men prefer to take 25s. a week and tucker.
9406. *By the Chairman*: The men prefer to be found by the employer instead of finding themselves? Yes. It is better for them if the employers find them.
9407. Have you fixed any price for contract work? No, we have not fixed the contract price because the mill fixed that, and we will see how it works out this year upon the mill estimates.
9408. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know what prices the mills have fixed? I have seen them. Some of the mills are giving very fair prices.
9409. The mills vary in their prices? Yes. We shall have to try it this year and see how it works. I forgot to bring a copy of the agreement that the Mossman Mill Company has made. It is a very severe agreement, and it is all one-sided. Their agreement is on similar cast-iron lines to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's.
9411. *By Mr. Paget*: What clause in the agreement do you take exception to? They do not allow the men to smoke in the fields, even when they are having a spell.
9412. They can smoke on the headlands? They will not allow them to smoke at all.
9413. *By Mr. Nielson*: That is to prevent fire? I understand that they have never objected to them smoking before.
9414. *By the Chairman*: Would you be satisfied if it was distinctly understood in the agreement that they can smoke on the headlands, and that they use covers to their pipes? Yes. The agreement says they must not smoke whether they are at work or not. There is another clause which says—
- In laying rails in the field the rails to be carefully laid, and in such a manner as to prevent the capsizing of trucks. Any trucks coming off through bad loading or faulty laying of line to be replaced on the line and, if necessary, reloaded.
- Trucks often capsize through no fault of the men. A great deal depends on the horses and the ground, and it is a very easy matter for a truck to get off portable lines, and it is not fair to ask the men to reload it. On the Mossman they have wooden trucks, and bolts and guardirons may work loose and the trucks may be damaged when they capsize.
9415. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think that in interpreting a clause like that it would be reasonable to give and take? The company do not give anything at all in the matter.
9416. If a man is hauling with awkward horses and a truck is pulled off the line, do you mean to say that under that agreement they would make the men reload that truck? It seems so here.
9417. It does not seem so to me—I think the cutters would only be responsible when the truck capsized through bad loading or faulty laying of the line? If a truck breaks down through the want of proper supervision in the workshops it is not fair to hold the men responsible.
9418. If you were taking a contract with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, do you not think they would make amendments in the agreement if you thrashed the matter out with them before you signed on behalf of a gang? As a rule, you have to sign all their agreements or leave them.
9419. If you left, would they be able to get other men? I dare say they would. The company lay it down that they "shall be at liberty to retain £1 10s. per month during the whole of the cutting season, such sum to be repaid to him upon his completing his contract to the satisfaction of the company." They can easily find fault with a man, and discharge him; and then he will lose that money.
9420. *By the Chairman*: Do you not give the officers of the company credit for being honourable men, just as you and other employees expect to be credited with being honourable men? As I know them, they are not honourable. They have been so antagonistic to white labour that we do not care to trust them. They have been nothing but contemptible and malicious in their concoctions against white labour.
9421. *By Mr. Paget*: Who are these people you are speaking of? I mean the Mossman Mill Company, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, and the black labour advocates. They have done and said everything they could for years to degrade us as much as they can, and to obstruct the white labour policy in every way they can.
9422. Do you know whether the Mossman Mill Company have signed on any men under that agreement? I do not know. I know one man who would not sign on.
9423. We have got evidence that they have signed on ten gangs of fifteen men each? Very likely. When men want work they have got to do it.

P. G. Ellis.

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9424. *By the Chairman:* Some of these men signed on in New South Wales and Victoria? That is quite possible. There is no shortage of men there. Men will sign anything when they are compelled to do so.

9425. But are they compelled? There is very little work in New South Wales and Victoria.

9426. *By Mr. Nielson:* You say that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, and other mills, have done everything to operate against white labour? We know they do. It is common property.

9427. Can you give us one illustration of that? Some gangs started on the Herbert this year, and there was a gang of first-class men on the Mulgrave, and they humbugged them until they had to leave. They put them in the worst cane, and humbugged them in all sorts of ways. They did the same on the Mossman until the men could not even make tucker, and had to give it up.

9428. And then the companies use it as an argument to prove that the men are no good? Yes. The company employed some men at chipping and trashing, and the company's yarn is that they are not going on with the trashing because it costs them £3 10s. per acre, although the usual price the farmers pay is 24s. an acre.

9429. What would be the average crop? It might be 15 to 20 tons per acre. The company say that it cost £3 10s. an acre in wages. I spoke to the men about it yesterday, and they said that though it cost more than it should have done, it did not cost £3 10s. They said they were not going to work eleven hours a day and "bullock" for £1 a week. They also said there was no supervision all the time they were working, and that they never saw the field ganger more than once a week, and, so far as they could see, they were only put there to loaf. Their belief is that the company want the work to cost as much as possible, and they put on men indiscriminately, and allow them to loiter.

9430. *By Mr. Paget:* It must be rather bad business to put on men to loiter? The company want to make it cost as much as possible, to show that white men are not able to do the work.

9431. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you know that at the Mossman they trash cane by contract for 17s. 6d. an acre? Some only pay that here. I suppose it depends on the crop.

9432. *By the Chairman:* Do you know that men on the Mossman are making from 5s. to 7s. 6d. a day at that rate? How many of them would make 7s. 6d. a day?

9433. That was during the slack season? There should be no difference between slack season and the crushing season.

9434. You think they should be paid the same wages all the year round? Yes.

9435. *By Mr. Nielson:* You told us you would be satisfied with 25s. a week in the slack season, and 30s. a week in the crushing season? I did say so, but the slack season in the mill should be the same all the year round.

9436. But we are talking now about field work? Well, I do not know whether the farmers can afford to give 6s. a day in what they call the slack season.

9437. *By the Chairman:* The farmers can afford it as well as the millowner? No; they cannot. You do not mean to tell me that farmers can afford to give the same wages as a great company. The company have done nothing towards raising wages this year, or in the way of reducing the hours of labour. This year they have robbed the farmers of 4s. 6d. a ton for cane. The company make no loss on anything. This year they are practically depriving the farmers of the bonus.

9438. *By Mr. Paget:* In what way? By knocking off 4s. 6d. a ton for the cane. They are deliberately robbing the farmers. I am not fabricating anything, as it is common property.

9439. *By Mr. Nielson:* What are they paying for the cane? I think they paid 13s. 3d. for last year's crop.

9440. *By Mr. Paget:* What did they pay in 1904? I am not certain about that. The company paid 13s. 3d. last year, and in 1904 I believe they paid 17s. 6d. The farmers will tell you all about that, as it is not within my province. We know they are being robbed. They are paying the farmers 8s. per ton less for their cane.

9441. These are statements which will have to be proved by and by? The farmers have paid better wages and given better hours than the Company have ever done. The Company have made no difference in their hours or wages at all. They are still giving the same old £1 a week to the mill hands, and they work the same old hours.

9442. *By Mr. Nielson:* And they are able to get plenty of men to work for them? Yes. I know eight or ten men who called at the mill for work the other day, but could not get it, although there is never any lack of work there. There is always plenty of work.

9443. *By the Chairman:* Are you speaking of any mill? I am speaking of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. I went up there yesterday and got a few names, just to see what they were getting paid. I have the list here. The first lot are chippers and trashers. Those men are getting £1 a week. There are other men getting 22s. 6d. a week, but these men are engine-drivers and electricians.

9444. And they are doing that work for 22s. 6d.? Yes.

9445. *By Mr. Nielson:* There is a man on this list getting 30s. a week—What does he do? He is in charge of the stable. His mate put his name down on that list. I think he is a married man, and is allowed 8s. a week for food.

[Document showing wages paid at Hambleton, tendered.]

9446. *By the Chairman:* If a man has to take money instead of being found, what do you think would be a fair thing to give for rations? 8s. a week would be a fair thing.

9447. *By Mr. Paget:* But he is also allowed a cottage? No; he pays rent for that. Everyone pays rent for the cottages they live in.

9448. I never heard of it before, and I have been connected with the industry for thirty years? They all have to pay rent here, from the chief right down. They pay from 5s. a week, upwards. Some get houses for 5s., some for 7s. 6d., and some for 10s. a week.

9449. Is that rent deducted from the wages that are paid to the men? Yes.

9450. *By Mr. Nielson:* Are the single men who live in the barracks charged for their accommodation? No; the company find accommodation for them. They get £1 a week and their tucker and accommodation.

9451. *By Mr. Paget:* I see one man on this list gets £2 a week—What does he do? He is a boiler attendant and fireman.

9452. *By Mr. Nielson:* Does he find himself? No; he is found.

9453. *By Mr. Paget:* You are aware that at the end of this year there are a large number of kanakas in the industry who may be deported according to the Federal Act? Yes.

- P. G. Ellis. 9454. The number is estimated at about 5,000 or 6,000? Yes.
9455. How many white men do you think will be necessary to replace that number of islanders?
- 7 May, 1906. 9456. There are not 5,000 or 6,000 islanders up here.
9457. No; but there are in the whole industry, and we are inquiring into the whole industry? I think with the men you will get from the Southern colonies that you will soon get plenty of men to take their places.
9458. Tell us the number you think will be required to take the place of these kanakas? I think 5,000 white men will do the work of 6,000 kanakas. I am pretty well sure of that. If you saw the kanakas working besides white men you would say the same yourself.
9459. I happen to have had a little experience that way—just a little experience? You may have had much more than I have had myself. You may be a planter for all I know, as I do not know your name, and perhaps you engaged kanakas yourself.
9460. Yes; I was a sugar planter for many years? Yes? I may say that the farmers who have engaged white labour this year are perfectly satisfied with the labour they have got.
9461. By Mr. Nielson: You distinguish between the farmer and the planter? The farmer is a planter.
9462. What about the mills? They do not wish to be satisfied, as they are against the white man all the time.
9463. By Mr. Paget: Can you tell us approximately the number of white men who were engaged in the industry during the crushing season last year? I cannot; but there were very few. Mrs. Miller had four gangs of twelve to fifteen men in each, and Mr. Griffin had one gang cutting his cane. That is about all.
9464. Is Mrs. Miller a large canegrower? Yes; she has 300 or 400 acres at the Mulgrave.
9465. Do any of the mills engage gangs? One mill humbugged the gang so much, as I told you, that they had to leave.
9466. I thought you said that was the Central Sugar Refining? No, it was the Mulgrave mill.
9467. By Mr. Nielson: What are the general wages paid to ploughmen? The farmers pay 25s. a week, with accommodation and tucker. The mill pays 22s. 6d. a week. In the mill they give a bonus, but we do not reckon that is a wage, because if a man works for five or six months, and then leaves, he does not get the bonus. We wish to do away with that bonus.
9468. By the Chairman: You want to see the bonus put on to the wages? Yes.
9469. So that a man can get the bonus whether he works or not? Yes. If a man works three months and then leaves, his wages are docked to the extent of 5s. a week. If a man goes to work in July he has to wait eighteen months before he gets the twelve months' bonus. They will not give a man a bonus for working for the first six months. You have to put in at least twelve months in their employ before you get any bonus.
9470. By Mr. Nielson: Then they only pay the bonus once a year? Yes.
9471. By Mr. Paget: And it is paid on 31st December? Yes, at the end of the crushing season.
9472. By the Chairman: A man knows the conditions when he enters upon the work? Of course he does, but would you like to see men stealing? If they cannot get work they must either beg, borrow, or steal and go to gaol. They are compelled by necessity to accept those terms. There has been a lot of poverty for many years in all the States. Public works have been stopped and men are travelling all over the country with their swags.
9473. What is your own occupation? My occupation, as a rule, is mining.
9474. Are you living in Cairns at the present time? I am living at Hambleton.
9475. You are not mining now? No.
9476. By Mr. Nielson: Have you followed sugar work since you came to this district? I have followed sugar work for the last two years. I worked at the Mossman for eighteen months and I was seven months with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company last year.
9477. By Mr. Paget: It has been suggested during the course of our inquiries that a system of references might be of great value to sugar-workers; how does your union view such a proposal? They have not taken it into consideration at all, and I do not think it is required. The mills have not asked for references, and they have always got good labour. They have made no complaints about it. You would be surprised if you knew how little there is in this cry about the unreliability of white labour so far as the mills are concerned. There is no trouble about drink. I only knew one man who was sacked for drunkenness at the Mossman all the time I was there, and I think there was only one man sacked at Hambleton last year.
9478. By the Chairman: We have been told that every pay day the men do not turn up for a day or two? That is utterly untrue. There might be an odd one or two; but, as a rule, the company give men like that a day or two off, and then put them on again.
9479. By Mr. Nielson: We were informed at the Mossman that during the crushing season a great number of men left on account of unreliability, and that unreliability was caused through intemperance—the mill books show that? Yes, if you go by the mill books. I have seen the mill books several times. They told you their yarn, but you never met the men themselves.
9480. By Mr. Paget: We are asking you to give evidence on behalf of the men? While I was there, there were over 400 men went through the mill books, and they employed 115 men on an average during the crushing season. The year before it was the same. But the reason there were so many men leaving was owing to their beastly environments. Half the men were lying about sick from enteric fever, the place was so filthy and horrible.
9481. By the Chairman: Of course all that will be altered by the Shearers' and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act? I do not know how Christian people could allow men to live under such conditions. I have spoken to farmers time after time, but they would do nothing. I was sick from the same cause, and had to go to Port Douglas for a spell.
9482. By Mr. Nielson: Clause 11 in the agreement of the Mossman Central Mill Company provides:—

The company may discharge any of the said labourers who may be found drunk, or bringing to or about the camp any intoxicating liquor of any kind, or who may commit a breach of any of the terms of this agreement, and the wages retained under clause 9 shall be absolutely forfeited to the company.

Is that not a reasonable provision? Yes; I do not believe in men bringing drink into the camps or being drunk there.

9482. In the rules of your union there appears to be no provision for the expulsion of a member under any circumstances—Do you not think it would be in the interests of the sober men generally if you had a provision to expel a man who was incapable of working by reason of intemperate habits? I dare say it would be a good thing. P. G. Ellis.
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9483. Do you not think, in the interests of the status of your union, that it would be a good provision? Yes. I dare say it has been overlooked.

9484. I presume the object of the union is that membership shall be a guarantee that a man is a good reliable worker? Yes.

9485. Do you think it would be a good thing to have some provision whereby you might expel a man for such a cause? Yes. I will mention it at the next meeting.

9486. By Mr. Paget: Has your union given any consideration to the proposed scheme for the establishment of workers' homes, so that men may settle down in the sugar districts with the object of becoming workers in the sugar industry and of making homes for themselves on these areas? I think it would be a very good idea. The system that Mr. McGowan has instituted on the Johnstone River is a very good one. By that means you will settle people on the land. When men travel about the country, hobnobbing together, it brutalises them and makes thieves and vagabonds of them.

9487. By the Chairman: Are there any Crown lands in the district that could be used for this form of settlement? I do not know. There is a lot of land held by the company and other people for speculative purposes.

9488. By Mr. Nielson: Are there not a lot of Crown lands at the back of Cairns? I believe Evelyn Scrub is good land.

9489. By Mr. Paget: Where is that? Between Atherton and the Russell River.

9490. Is that not too far away? I do not think so. I have never been there, but I have heard about it.

9491. By Mr. Nielson: Is the Atherton Scrub all selected? I think it has been selected for years. I do not know whether it is suitable for cane.

9492. By Mr. Paget: I am not talking of areas that may be suitable for cane, but of land suitable for small homesteads? I believe there is plenty of good land a few miles from Atherton.

9493. By the Chairman: Not nearer than that. I do not think so. The land is no good between here and Atherton.

9494. What area would be most suitable for a man to make a home upon? If you gave a man about 50 acres it would be as much as he could manage. For dairying he would want a larger area. Until men are settled on the country, it will never be any good.

9495. Are you familiar with the country about here? Not much. I know all the country up Chillagoe and Atherton way.

9496. By Mr. Nielson: Do you know anything about the Labour Bureau? I know there is a bureau in Brisbane, where men apply for work and by which they are sent up country.

9497. Is there not a branch here? I am not aware that there is.

9498. By Mr. Paget: Have your union made any inquiries? No.

9499. By the Chairman: Is there a private office for registering labour here? There are two.

9500. And you absolutely do not know that there is a Government Labour Bureau here? I never heard of it.

9501. By Mr. Nielson: Do you think if there was a properly run labour bureau here that it would be of assistance to the workers and employers? I dare say it would be. If there was a labour bureau it would enable a man to find out if any labour was wanted in this district.

9502. And in other districts, too? Yes.

9503. At present, the men who want that information wear out a lot of boot leather for nothing? Yes.

9504. By the Chairman: Well, there is a labour bureau here, and there are 120 altogether in the State? I never heard of anyone getting work through the Labour Bureau, though I heard that they sent there for provisions.

9505. By the Chairman: Do you think there is anything we have not asked you that you would like to speak about that comes within the scope of our inquiry? We rather went outside the scope of our inquiry in our desire to let you say all you had to say? I think the most telling point which we would like to see brought out is that a better wage should be given.

9506. We would all like that? And the mill provisions should be better. The provisions are very bad there.

9507. By Mr. Nielson: Are the provisions very bad at the other mills? Yes, with the exception of Mossman. I believe the Mossman mill gives the best provisions. The provisions at the Mulgrave are shockingly bad, and last year they had a bit of a strike over it. Since the strike they have been better, but before that the men had to spend 3s. or 4s. a week out of their own money to feed themselves.

9508. By the Chairman: How many public-houses are there at Mulgrave? Three.

9509. Is there a large farming population settled round here? Yes.

9510. If there is no intemperance, as you say, how do these publicans get a living? A good many people have a drink, but they do not get drunk. Men can easily take a drink without making beasts of themselves. Some men come in and have a drink or two, and there are others who spend all they have got, but they do not neglect their work. They get drunk on Saturday night, but they turn up to their work all right on Monday.

9511. By Mr. Nielson: Though a man does not neglect his work, he is not as competent to follow his work as he should be? He might not be the first day, but he would be all right on the second day. There was no trouble at the mill last year, although some of them got on the spree on Saturday and Sunday.

9512. By Mr. Paget: What mill was that? The Colonial Sugar Refining Company's mill.

9513. By Mr. Nielson: Do you think it is a very bad thing to have them drinking on a Saturday? Yes.

9514. Can you suggest anything that will give attractions to the men other than the hotel? I cannot suggest anything.

9515. By the Chairman: You are in touch with these men who are affected by it, and you see the evil; cannot you suggest a remedy for it? They have a library out there.

9516. Where? Hambleton.

9517. By Mr. Paget: They have a library, reading-rooms, draughts, and all that sort of thing? Yes; but there is nothing that will keep a man at his work except to make a home for him, and to let him have some land, get married, and settle down.

9518. By the Chairman: Do you think single men will settle on farms? I cannot say that. There might be a good lot of them. I know some who would like to get land to settle down. If they were settled near the railway where they could take their produce, it would be the means of settling a good lot of them. It is no use settling men on land where there is no town or seaport.

- P. G. Ellis. 9510. *By Mr. Nielson*: You think a man gets drunk because he has no other object in life? Yes.
- 7 May, 1906. 9520. *By the Chairman*: Do the mills provide reading-rooms for the men? The Colonial Sugar Refining Company do.
9521. There is a reading-room at Hambledon? Yes.
9522. Is it open at night? Yes. There is a school of arts here. It is patronised a little, but not much by the men. At the mill you pay 3d. a week for the library. That is very reasonable, as you can see all the papers and take away books to read.
9523. Is it availed of? Yes.
9524. *By Mr. Nielson*: The men do not object to pay the 3d. a week? No; they are very glad of it. It keeps them at home at night reading books and papers instead of going down to the town drinking.

JOHN DELAHUNT, Dairy Farmer, examined:

- J. Delahunt. 9525. *By the Chairman*: Do you live here? No.
- 7 May, 1906. 9526. Where do you live? New South Wales.
9527. How long have you been up in this district? I have been eight months in Queensland, but I have not been all that time in this district.
9528. On the search for land? Yes.
9529. How long have you been in this district? About a month.
9530. What is the nature of the evidence you want to give us? I came looking for land, but I find that the farmers who have got the land are asking an exorbitant price for it.
9531. You have not been able to see any Crown lands, and the land that you would purchase that is held by the farmers, they ask an exorbitant price for? Yes.
9532. Is it scrub land or grazing land? Scrub land.
9533. Where is it? In the Atherton district.
9534. What price are they asking? £10 an acre for cleared scrub and £3 an acre for the uncleared land.
9535. The uncleared scrub they ask £3 an acre for? It is not uncleared scrub. It is not such good land as that. It is mixed forest and scrub.
9536. You think £10 an acre is more than you can afford to give? It is more than the land is worth. It would take £10 an acre to clear it and make it fit for the plough. If you cannot use a plough you cannot make a farm pay in this district.
9537. Did you go to the Lands Office to see if there was any land available? No.
9538. Well, how do you know there is no land available? I went to the land agent at Atherton, but not to the office in Cairns.
9539. Is that what you came here to say? My intention was to start dairy farming and sugar-growing in this district.
9540. *By Mr. Paget*: Under white labour conditions? Certainly.
9541. Is there anything else you can tell us? I think the farmers are holding too much land in this district. A far greater number of people could be settled if they would let them have their land.
9542. *By Mr. Nielson*: What part of New South Wales do you come from? From near Parramatta.

PETER GEORGE GRANT, Police Magistrate and Inspector of Pacific Islanders, examined:

- P. G. Grant. 9543. *By the Chairman*: You are Police Magistrate and Inspector of Pacific Islanders in Cairns? Yes.
- 7 May, 1906. 9544. What is the approximate number of islanders in this district? Last December there were between 600 and 700.
9545. You are preparing a return giving all the information we require about the islanders? Yes.
9546. Can you say, from your intercourse with the islanders, how they view their approaching deportation? I think most of them are determined to go; but I fancy there are some who are not so keen on going.
9547. Do you think the majority will go without any trouble? I think so.
9548. Are there many walk-about "boys" here just now? There are a good many.
9549. *By Mr. Paget*: What is the approximate number? I should say there are 200, if not more; but the trouble is you can never tell, because sometimes "boys" clear out of the district without saying anything about it, and others come overland into the district without my knowledge. There may be some trouble getting rid of them, because I think they have been drawing money out of the savings bank to a great extent.
9550. *By the Chairman*: They do not like to return to the islands empty-handed? No.
9551. *By Mr. Paget*: They have had opportunities to return home? Some of them do not want to go. I think a lot of them are employed without my knowledge.
9552. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you an assistant? Yes. He can, perhaps, give you more information than I can, because my time is pretty well taken up otherwise.
9553. You are of opinion that there are a number of "boys" employed illegally? I fancy there are a good many. I could not say distinctly, but that is my opinion.
9554. Since when have you been of that opinion? It is only an opinion that I have formed. I have no legal grounds for forming it.
9555. But when did it first enter your mind? I would have made a point of carefully inquiring into the matter if I thought I had grounds to go upon, but it has been brought under my notice within the last few days.
9556. Do you not think you ought to put an officer on to inquire into the matter? I have done so.
9557. *By the Chairman*: Are there any walk-about "boys" being re-engaged under a six months' agreement? They come in occasionally to be re-engaged.
9558. Is there anything which prevents them being re-engaged? One man wanted to employ some kanaka, but he told me he was rather afraid to do so, on account of being held responsible for the balance of the passage money as the last employer. I think that is the principal drawback.
9559. If that difficulty were removed in some way, do you think the "boys" would be readily re-engaged? I fancy a good many people would re-engage them but for that.
9560. *By Mr. Paget*: The question is now being tested in the Mackay district? Yes.

9561. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you always get to know in time to acquaint the "boys" when a ship is leaving for the islands? No. In some cases, Mr. Wilson, the assistant inspector, has had to work till 11 or 12 o'clock at night to get them ready to go. We do not get sufficient notice.
9562. Then the want of timely notice has operated against the "boys" leaving? The agents of the ships ought to give us notice.
9563. Do you not think your head office should give you notice? I am quite new to this work, so that I do not wish to say anything about the head office.
9564. *By the Chairman*: Do the labour vessels ever come here to ship "boys"? I have never seen a labour vessel here. I believe one came; and it would be a great advantage to everyone if they did come here.
9565. You think some "boys" would leave if a ship came here? Yes; and I would be satisfied then that they had left the place. I will not break any agreement unless both parties are willing, and the vessel has to be ready to take the "boys" away to the islands.
9566. *By Mr. Paget*: In case they change their minds, as they very frequently do? Yes.
9567. *By the Chairman*: Having had no previous experience of kanakas, you probably cannot give any opinion as to their deportation? I could not offer any suggestion that is worth anything; but I fancy that, if they are to be got rid of, the best way would be to adopt a speedier method of deporting them than by means of labour vessels.
9568. *By Mr. Paget*: Would you suggest deporting them in steamers carrying large numbers? I have not given the matter any consideration; but, if I simply wanted to get rid of them, I would get rid of them as soon as possible.
9569. *By the Chairman*: The only difficulty is the food supply in the islands? Yes.
9570. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you in charge of the Labour Bureau? No. I think the clerk of petty sessions is always in charge; but I have only had one application for work. I have had plenty of applications for passes up the line. That comes under the Police Department, and I have always referred the matter to them. I believe a letter came to the clerk of petty sessions to-day from the South asking if there was any chance of employment here; but, according to the letter, the man would not have the slightest difficulty in obtaining work anywhere.

NIELS PETER PETERSEN, Cane Farmer, examined:

9571. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer.
9572. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you appearing as the representative of a farmers' association? Yes, as a representative of the Aloomba Farmers' Association.
9573. What is the area of your holding? 180 acres.
9574. What is the total area under cane? It is all under cultivation except 5 or 6 acres.
9575. What cane did you cut last season? 1,342 tons from about 120 acres.
9576. Did you harvest it with white or coloured labour? With Hindoo labour.
9577. Was it wages or contract work? Contract work.
9578. What price did you pay? 3s. 6d. a ton for trashing, cutting, and loading on to tram trucks.
9579. Did the men carry out their contract? Yes.
9580. Have you registered for white labour this year? No.
9581. How do you propose to carry on your business of cane-growing? I shall have to carry it on with coloured labour so long as I can get any.
9582. I suppose you are aware that the Commonwealth Act states that all kanakas may be deported after the end of this year? I am quite aware of that.
9583. *By Mr. Nielson*: You have no intention of trying to work with white labour? I would not say that. I tried white labour nine years ago. My first crop was partly cut with white labour. Two men took the contract and started with white labour, but before they finished they had to engage coloured labour.
9584. Is that the only trial you have given to white labour? Yes.
9585. Personally, you have not had any experience of growing cane with white labour? Not beyond that.
9586. *By the Chairman*: Do you employ kanakas? No.
9587. *By Mr. Paget*: You have not registered this year? No.
9588. You have contracts with coloured men? No. I have not made any contracts yet, but I expect to get my cane cut by coloured men.
9589. *By the Chairman*: Do you not think it would pay you to register your farm, in consideration of the bonus, and work with white labour? I do not think we can get sufficient white men to do it.
9590. Assuming that you were sure of getting a sufficient number of white men? But I am not sure. I do not think there is a sufficient number of white men in the North to carry on the sugar industry. We want 1,000 men here to cut the cane.
9591. *By Mr. Nielson*: One thousand more than you have got? No.
9592. *By the Chairman*: How many will you want to take the place of the kanakas? One thousand white men.
9593. To do the work of 700 kanakas? There are a couple of hundred Hindoos and 200 Chinamen here.
9594. There is no proposal to interfere with the Hindoos or Chinese? No.
9595. *By Mr. Nielson*: You are not anxious to try it with white labour? I cannot do it.
9596. You are not anxious to try it? It is no use trying it. The white men are not here and cannot be got.
9597. *By the Chairman*: The Mossman mill brought up 150 men the other day? That would be a small item here.
9598. But if the Mossman people can bring up men, why cannot you do the same? It would not be enough. I am sure 150 is not enough for the Mossman mill. They want at least 400 there.
9599. *By Mr. Paget*: The Mossman mill has been trying to harvest with white men? It will take 400 men to do it.
9600. There is 40 per cent. of the areas registered there? I know nothing about the Mossman mill.
9601. *By Mr. Nielson*: You have not made any endeavour to get white men? No.
9602. For all you know, there may be plenty to be got in Australia? I do not think so.

P. G. Grant.
7 May, 1906.

N. P.
Petersen.
7 May, 1906.

- N. P. Petersen.
7 May, 1906.
9603. You have not tried to find out? No.
9604. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you voicing the opinions of the Aloomba Farmers' Association now, or are you speaking as an individual? They did not give me any special instructions beyond electing me to give evidence.
9605. *By the Chairman*: How many members of the association are registered for white labour? Seven.
9606. *By Mr. Paget*: How many members are there in your association? There are a lot of Chinamen growing cane there.
9607. Have half of your members registered? Yes.
9608. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you ten members in your association? More than that.
9609. And half of them carry on with white labour? Yes. The small farmers will do all right with it.
9610. *By Mr. Paget*: What is a small farmer? The man with 30 or 50 acres.
9611. If these seven men have 30 acres each that will make 210 acres? Yes.
9612. Do you know if the farmers who have registered for white labour at Aloomba expect to carry on with family labour? Only one member has got any family.
9613. Have you given any consideration to the subject of the deportation of the kanakas at all? I employed kanakas a number of years ago and there are kanakas at Aloomba now that I employed seventeen years ago. These men have been here for twenty-five years and it will be a very great hardship on them if they are deported.
9614. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are they ticket "boys"? No; but some of them have families and grown up children.
9615. *By the Chairman*: Do they live in this district? Yes.
9616. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are they leasing land? No; they are working. Some of them have land.
9617. Where is it? On the Russell River and on the Lower Mulgrave.
9618. Those who were here twenty-five years ago could have got exemption tickets? They did not get tickets because there was not sufficient notice given to them.
9619. *By the Chairman*: There were a lot out West who knew nothing about it? Yes.
9620. *By Mr. Paget*: A large number will leave at the end of this year; can you offer any suggestion as to how they can be deported with humanity? Some of them want to go home.
9621. They can go if they want to? I reckon forcible ejection from Queensland will result in great hardship.
9622. Why? Because if they go back to the islands, they will die of starvation. They cannot live on taro and yams, after being used to beef and good tucker here.
9623. *By Mr. Nielson*: What period would you fix as the limit of time spent in Queensland to enable a "boy" to stay here? With regard to those who have just come here it would not be a hardship to deport them. But there are numbers of kanakas knocking about here who are actually starving. They catch fish, and offer to sell the fish for bread or something to eat. They cannot get work on account of the uncertainty about the payment of the extra passage money to the islands, because the growers do not know how much they will have to pay to send the "boys" back. I paid £5 for each of the kanakas I employed, and I was told that was all that I would have to pay, but at the present time it appears that they are charging £3 more.
9624. £2 is the extra fare, as the total fare is £7 now? That is all very well.
9625. *By Mr. Paget*: There is the extra money to pay to send them to the coast town where the vessel is leaving? Yes. I have known the "boys" get their return fare to Bundaberg, and instead of going home they have gone to work there.
9626. *By the Chairman*: From whom did they get the money? From the farmers. They got £1 each to go to Bundaberg.
9627. *By Mr. Nielson*: When was this? Some of the Mulgrave "boys" went down there.
9628. I do not know of any "boy" who has signed on in the Bundaberg district in the last twelve months? Well, that was what I heard.
9629. *By Mr. Paget*: I know that sort of thing was done from my own personal experience—Is there anything else you would like to say? I do not think there is enough white labour for this district, and I do not see how we can get it except by free immigration.
9630. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think you could get them if you paid their passages? Where would you get them from?
9631. From the same place you intended to get them from by free immigration? But you could not land them here.
9632. *By the Chairman*: What is to prevent that? The Immigration Restriction Act.
9633. *By Mr. Nielson*: You have not heard of the latest Act? That is not much better.
9634. Why? Because you have to go to Europe and get your labour, and, when the agreement is signed, you have to send to the Minister and ask for his permission.
9635. You can get the permit before you go to Europe? How can you get a permit before you get your agreement?
9636. You get the permit first, and you have to promise that they will be paid the ruling rate of wages? Well, anyone who knows anything about new chums, knows they are not worth the ruling rate of wages when they first come out here.
9637. *By the Chairman*: Well, we had a witness, a Scandinavian, who said that the new chums could stand up and work with the best of them just as soon as they came out to the colonies? I was a Scandinavian before I came out here, and I know I was not the same man in the first two years that I was afterwards.
9638. *By Mr. Nielson*: Some of them have told us that they are not as good now as when they first arrived? I quite admit that.

ALEXANDER MANN, Cane Farmer, examined:

- A. Mann.
7 May, 1906.
9639. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer at Hambleton.
9640. What is the area of your farm? My brother and I hold 103 acres between us.
9641. How much is under cane? About 80 acres.
9642. How much did you cut last year? A little over 50 acres for a tonnage of about 709 tons.
9643. Did you cut it with white or black labour? With white labour.

A. Mann.

7 May, 1906.

9644. What wages did you pay? 5s. a day and rations.

9645. Had you any difficulty in getting men at those wages? No, I got plenty of men.

9646. Were you satisfied with the way the work was done? Yes. It was more satisfactory than I had

had it done before by white labour.

9647. I suppose you are registered? Yes; I have cut with white labour for three years.

9648. At about the same rates? I did it by contract before.

9649. What did you pay when you were cutting by contract? 8s. 6d. a ton to trash, cut, and load.

9650. Have you made arrangements for taking off the present crop? Not yet.

9651. Are there any roads near your farm which enable you to express an opinion with respect to the supply of labour in the district? We are in between two roads. There is a good deal of unemployed labour just now, but this is a very slack time.

9652. What labour was there last year? There was plenty in the crushing season.

9653. Have you formed any opinion as to the position with regard to white labour when the kanakas are removed? I think there will be a little trouble, and a scarcity for a time.

9654. Are you a member of any farmers' association? Yes; of the Hambleton Farmers' Association.

9655. Have your association taken into consideration the advisability of taking steps to provide themselves with labour in the Southern markets? I believe the registered growers have requested the Colonial Sugar Refining Company to find labour for them to take off this season's crop.

9656. Are the Colonial Sugar Refining Company engaging gangs? It was only very recently that it was mooted to them, and Mr. Farquhar, their travelling manager, said they had been doing it in Childers for the last two years, and that it had worked very successfully there, and he did not see why it should not be so here.

9657. Do you know whether the company are actually doing anything? They would not bind themselves in any way, but they are hopeful, because they have to get labour to cut their own registered cane.

9658. Do you think there is likely to be any serious shortage of labour? I do not say that it will be serious if people will use some judgment with regard to the coming season's crop; but I maintain that the bonus paid was not sufficient to make up the difference between the price of black and white labour, and, owing to men sticking to the kanakas till the last moment, the trouble has come now with a jump. If the bonus had been sufficient to equalise the difference between white and coloured labour at the start, I think there would have been very little trouble or feeling, and things would have righted themselves.

9659. Then you think that any trouble that may arise will really be consequent upon employers not having taken action in time to provide themselves with white labour? Partly so; but it is very hard to put it to them in that light, considering that they were making more money than the men who employed white labour.

9660. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you mean to say that, in your opinion, there would be sufficient white labour here if the inducement was good enough? I think men can be fetched here from different parts of Australia.

9661. If this had been done in time, there would have been no trouble? In my opinion there would not.

9662. How long have you been engaged in the industry? Over eight years.

9663. And you regard yourself as a thoroughly practical man? Yes.

9664. You are no theorist? No. I do the work in the field myself alongside my men.

9665. Is there any reason why men should not do this sort of work? I have been in Cairns for the last eighteen years, and I have done manual labour all the time, including navvying and farming.

9666. How does cane-cutting compare with navvying? Cane-cutting is a lighter job than navvying.

9667. *By Mr. Paget*: You include loading, of course, when you talk about cane-cutting? Yes. Last year I worked slides and a derrick, and lifted the cane on to the trucks with a pulley and chain. That makes the loading much easier for the men. The top of the lorry is as high as this table, and a man can lift it much easier than by carrying it up the ladder on his shoulder.

9668. *By the Chairman*: The general use of mechanical appliances of that kind would lessen the labour? Yes, and they will come into force very much this year.

9669. You have been here for eighteen years—How often have you been South to recuperate? Once to Brisbane and once to Townsville.

9670. Are you a married man? No.

9671. You do not look delicate at the present time? No; I must say that I feel fairly healthy.

9672. Have you given any thought to the question of settling men here, and enabling married men to live here, so that their services will always be available in the district? I think it would be a very good line. Even if they only had an acre of good land, it would be a great help to them in the slack season.

9673. You do not expect them to become producers for sale off that one acre? A married man would sell very little. If he got a cow he could feed it on the cane tops, and if he grew potatoes and cabbages, that would be sufficient to keep him.

9674. It would support his family and supplement his wages? Yes; and be worth a few shillings a week to him.

9675. Do you think if the land were made available that suitable men would avail themselves of the opportunity to settle on the land? I think they would. Any farmer with a large area of land should give every inducement for men to go into it, and give them as acre of cultivable land.

9676. You think that would be to the interests of the holders of the land? Yes, it would be better for both parties.

9677. Is there anything in the climate that women and children cannot live under? I must say that I have seen a lot of women become unhealthy after they have had children. But I have seen some very healthy women who have reared healthy children in this Cairns district.

9678. *By Mr. Paget*: You said that if the change from coloured to white labour had come about more gradually, then it might possibly have been more successful? I think it would.

9679. But the position is that it has not come about in such a way, as there are a large number of kanakas to be replaced next year? Yes.

9680. Can you offer any suggestion as to the deportation of these labourers? I have not employed any myself for three or four years, but I had them for a few years before that, and any I had were willing to go home at the termination of their agreements. I had a general conversation with the "boys" then, and at least 90 per cent. of them were willing to go home.

A. Mann. 9682. Can you give us any suggestion about deporting this large number at the end of this year without inflicting any hardship on them? It would be a hardship on them to send them home in large batches to the islands. I think that should be done very gradually.

7 May, 1906.

9683. In the event of such a system coming about, how would you suggest that the "boys" should support themselves, because you know that they will be unable to support themselves after the end of the year under the Federal Act? The Act should be amended to give the farmers permission to employ them temporarily till such time as boats are available to take them to those portions of their islands where there are sufficient rations. I do not think it would be humane to deport them to a place where there is nothing for them to eat.

9684. Or where there is a scarcity of food? Yes. Let them be taken back to the islands as soon as the islands are able to receive an additional number of them.

9685. I suppose you have not sufficient knowledge of the subject to say how long this should continue? I have not. I have not been amongst them since I employed white labour, and they have practically dropped out of my line a little bit.

9686. This scheme would also allow white labour to be substituted in the gradual way in which you think it should have been substituted from the start? Yes.

9687. By the Chairman: You think that after the Commonwealth Act was passed in 1904 the employers of kanakas should have set to work to obtain a proportionate amount of white labour? I think so for two reasons. They would be satisfying themselves whether cane can be grown by white labour, and, if it was not to be a success, they would have some facts to put before the Federal Government which would have led to the amendment of the Act. As it is, such a small percentage, especially in the North, took advantage of the Act that it looked as if they were running bull-headed against the Act.

9688. As a matter of conscience, are you an opponent of kanaka labour? No; but after legislation is passed by the representatives of the people, it is the duty of the people to try and carry that legislation into effect. I believe only about 2½ per cent. of the cane supplied to the Hambledon mill last season was grown by white labour.

9689. By Mr. Nielson: The employers have made no endeavour to carry out the Act? Practically none.

9690. By Mr. Paget: That is against some 60 per cent. grown by white labour in the Mackay district last year? I am practically speaking of the North.

9691. By the Chairman: What is your opinion of the quality of the white labour at the disposal of the growers? There are, some very fair men, and some who are very inferior; but my experience so far is that eighty white men who are willing to work and have had a little practice at it are equal to 100 kanakas.

9692. What is the reason for a proportion of the men being unsatisfactory? I think drink is at the root of it.

9693. I suppose in a climate like this reasonable temperance is even more necessary than in a cooler climate? I believe the drink is far from being what it is called, and that is the greatest trouble.

9694. By Mr. Paget: Are you speaking as a member of a temperance body? No. I can take a drink, and I can let it alone. It would be a very good thing for the men if, during the crushing season, they would agree to leave their money in the company's hands, with the exception, say, of £1 a month, which they might require for clothes and tobacco. Of course, that is for single men. I do not suppose married men could do that. If the mill company supplied the men with goods, they could furnish them with monthly statements.

9695. By Mr. Paget: It might be said that they were instituting "truck" shops? It might.

9696. Is there a savings bank at Hambledon? No.

9697. Or at the Mulgrave? No. I believe they are agitating for one, but they have not got it so far.

9698. The system you are in favour of has been tried at several mills in the past, but, I am sorry to say, not with any very great success? I tried it once with men on contract—there was only six or seven week's work—and they wanted to know if the way to encourage a "White Australia" was to keep a man's money from him. I told them that if any man wanted his money he could get it. Last year I had just six weeks' work and the men were quite satisfied and allowed the money to lie until the work was finished.

CHRISTIAN PETER ANDERSEN, Cane Farmer, examined:

C. P. Andersen.

7 May, 1906.

9699. By the Chairman: What are you? I am a cane farmer at Aloomba. I appear here at the request of the Aloomba Farmers' Association.

9700. What is the area of your farm? I have 185 acres leased to Chinamen, and I am working 54 acres myself.

9701. Have you registered your 54 acres? Yes.

9702. Did you cut any cane last year? I only took it over this year. I had no cane last year.

9703. What rent do the Chinamen pay you? £170 a year.

9704. By Mr. Paget: What crops are they growing? All sugar-cane.

9705. By the Chairman: Have you any difficulty in getting white labour for your 54 acres? No.

9706. What do you pay? I have one of my sons with me. I am only employing a young boy at 10s. a week.

9707. Have you made any arrangements for taking off your crop? Not yet.

9708. What evidence do you wish to give us? I really did not want to give evidence at all, but I was requested to come.

9709. Do you think there will be plenty of white labour next year? I think there will be a shortage.

9710. Are your association taking any steps to procure labour from the South? Not as yet.

9711. Do you not think it is time something was done? Yes. There are only a few farmers out there. They are all working on a small scale, and they are waiting for what will turn up.

9712. By Mr. Paget: Are you expecting your cane to be harvested this year by one of the company's white gangs? I have only a few acres under cane this year. All the land is to be put under cane next year.

9713. By Mr. Nielson: What was the average tonnage of your tenants' crops last year? 2,600 tons off about 150 acres.

9714. Was that about an average return? They will have a considerably bigger return this year.

9715. What was it the year before last? They had no land under cane then.

9716. *By the Chairman:* How long have the Chinamen's leases to run? They were leased for six years, and this is the fourth year.

9717. Is there anything else you can tell us? A large percentage of the white men who are here now have been knocking about the back country for years, and are not the class of men who are likely to make a success of it, because they have never done any real hard work. They are old fossils, and men of that sort. We want good men from other places to make it a success.

9718. Do you think it would be an inducement to men to come here and work in the industry if land were available in small areas for them to settle upon? There would be plenty of room for them.

9719. What area would be sufficient to induce men to take up such homesteads? It would depend a great deal on what they engaged in. There is a big movement on here in connection with dairy farming at present.

9720. *By Mr. Paget:* But you want labour for the cane fields? They might milk a few cows in the off season. Dairying and the sugar season would not clash very much.

9721. *By the Chairman:* But cows want milking in the crushing season as well as in the off season? Yes.

9722. If a man had 5 acres of good land he might grow potatoes and pumpkins, and he might leave his wife and family there while he went away to work—Would a scheme like that work? That would be a good idea.

9723. How much land have you got altogether? 240 acres. It is all under cultivation.

9724. Are there any people in the district who have land that they are not using? There are large areas of good land lying idle in various places.

9725. Do you not think it would be a good thing if these people endeavoured to settle men on the land and so provide themselves with labour? Yes.

9726. Have the members of your association large areas of land? Some of them.

9727. You approve of a system of settlement if it can be brought about? Yes.

CHARLES CRAWFORD SMYTH, General Commission Agent, examined:

9728. *By the Chairman:* You know what you came here to tell us, so we will just take your evidence in your own way? Yes.

9729. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you resided many years in Cairns? No; not many years, but I have been travelling up and down the coast for twenty years. I take a great interest in the welfare of Queensland generally.

9730. And the sugar industry in particular? Not necessarily. Mining is more in my line. But I have been amongst it, and have met the sugar people, and I have made a study of the white labour and black labour question. I have made a careful study of the question.

9731. *By the Chairman:* Well? My idea is that there are large areas of land held merely for speculative purposes. I might be wrong, but that is my idea. I cannot, for the life of me, make out why Australians or white people cannot work those areas. I have met men in Brisbane who came down there to get on a spree. I asked them where they got their money from, and they said from Cairns. They said they had been to the Cairns sugar district, and then they came down to Brisbane with a nice cheque. What I want to point out is, that the people who make their money here by virtue of labour should be induced, if possible, to reside in the district.

9732. How would you bring that about? It will have to be brought about by the owner of the land himself. He will have to be more humanitarian than he is at the present moment.

9733. *By Mr. Paget:* The owner of the land? Yes. If the Government have the land here they should devise some scheme whereby a man and his family could come and reside in the district. With all due respect to people's opinions, Cairns is not such a bad place to live in as it is supposed to be.

9734. You think the provisions of the Special Agricultural Selections Act, which was passed last year, could be put into force here? Yes. I was one of the authors of that Act.

9735. It would suit in this district? Yes it would. I was one of the authors of that Act. I was going down Queen street, in Brisbane, one day and I saw a lot of idlers there. There were some good men amongst them, and I suggested to them, "Why do you not form so-and-so?" We brought the matter before the Hon. J. T. Bell, and Mr. Bell brought in a Bill, which was rejected. Afterwards Mr. Denham brought in another Bill and it was passed into law. My idea is this: In the Cairns district we have untold wealth from a sugar, timber, and mineral point of view. We have got any amount of unemployed, as the chairman will know. We should get these people to come here and bring their families here. They could make a good living for their families if we can devise some scheme whereby they can be put on the land at no cost to themselves. It would bring revenue to the Government at the same time.

9736. I do not quite follow you, as the money must be found from somewhere, and you expect the other fellow to find it? The Government could find the money.

9737. How is it to become revenue-producing to the Government? These people will be clearing the Government's land and they will make money out of selling the timber. There are thousands of acres—in fact, millions of acres—here that are no good to the State at the present time, and it would be made good land for the State provided the Government devised some scheme whereby the timber could be cut and sent away to market, and at the same time they would be clearing the land for settlement.

9738. *By the Chairman:* Do you think close settlement on the land will do it? Yes, close settlement is the thing that will do it.

9739. Do you think you would get these settlers in Australia? There are any amount of people willing to settle on the land provided they can get the wherewithal to settle there. They should be put there without expense to themselves, provided they are reputable beings. Of course, what I am talking about is a mere political matter.

9740. *By Mr. Paget:* We do not want politics? I think myself that the mining laws and the land laws want a terrible lot of looking into.

9741. *By the Chairman:* We have nothing to do with that—Do you think such a scheme as offering a man a bit of land—say, from an acre to 5 acres—so that he could build a house on it and bring his wife and family here, would be a means of keeping his labour in the district? If he has got an anchorage in that way he will become a good settler. He could settle on some of the land we have behind Cairns.

C. P.
Andersen.
7 May, 1906.

C. C. Smyth. 9742. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you know of any land within reasonable distance of a sugar-mill that could be made available for such a purpose? Friends of mine have told me that they came up here with the idea of taking up sugar lands. They went to the sugar-growers and the growers told them that as the black labour had been stopped they did not know which way to turn, and they would have to "chuck" up their land. But when my friends wanted to buy that land they asked as high as £50 an acre for it.

9743. I was speaking of Crown lands? So far as I can hear, the Atherton Scrub is a wonderful place.

9744. *By the Chairman*: We can get that information from the Crown lands ranger? Yes. My idea is that there are any amount of people willing to settle in Cairns provided they can get land from the Government, and they want that land.

9745. Is there anything else? With regard to the deportation of kanakas, that is outside of our State control now. I do not look upon the kanakas as an altogether undesirable man to have in the country, and it appears that there are many of them who are afraid to go back to their native homes. Cannot some island be secured by the Commonwealth so that these kanakas may be put there, and let them make a sort of colony of their own?

9746. *By Mr. Nielson*: All of them? Those who are afraid to go back.

9747. There are hundreds of places where they will be welcomed by settlers in the islands? But some of them are afraid to go back.

9748. There are hundreds of islands colonised and settled on where they are anxious to get hold of the kanaka labour? A lot of them that are civilised are afraid to go back to the islands.

JOHN MANN, M.L.A., examined:

J. Mann, M.L.A. 9749. *By the Chairman*: Are you a brother of Mr. Mann who has already given evidence? Yes.

7 May, 1906. 9750. You know exactly what the scope of our Commission is, and what we want to know? Is there anything particular you want me to go into?

9751. The principal question is whether there is likely to be a shortage of labour when the kanakas go, and if so, how can we replace that labour? So far as I can speak of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, which I grow for, they seem to have the idea that they can secure plenty of labour.

9752. *By Mr. Paget*: This year? Yes, this year.

9753. But what about next year? They have registered all their own cane this year to cut it by white labour.

9754. *By Mr. Nielson*: Where do they expect to get the labour? From the South.

9755. Are they taking any steps to get it? So far as I can learn, they intend to harvest the cane by gangs of white labour.

9756. They have not commenced recruiting those gangs yet? No; there is no work in the canefields for white labour at present.

9757. There is no danger of any scarcity of labour in the immediate future? No; I do not think so.

9758. That is, if the proper methods are taken to obtain it? Yes. No effort has been made to obtain white labour. I know one area which a farmer gave over to the company. To show that the company did not intend to try white labour, they allowed that farm to lapse into black labour again.

9759. *By Mr. Paget*: I thought they registered their areas? Yes; they have since then. When they did this before, they thought they were going to upset the federal legislation.

9760. When was this? It was about three years ago.

9761. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are there many men out of work in the district at the present time? I believe there are a good many. I see a good many swagmen knocking about.

9762. *By the Chairman*: Can you suggest any scheme by which the islanders may be deported without any inhumanity to them? If a boat was in Cairns harbour, and the "boys" were notified of the fact, I believe the great majority would go back voluntarily. I have never met one who said he wished to stay in Queensland.

9763. *By Mr. Paget*: The difficulty hitherto has been that the islanders cannot get sufficiently quickly to the boats, and before they can get on board they change their minds? I have known "boys" come in here, and while waiting for a boat they have exhausted their money, and have been compelled to re-engage because they do not like to return home empty-handed.

9764. *By the Chairman*: Have you given any thought to the question of the food supply in the islands? I can only go by what I see in the Press, and adverse opinions have been expressed on that matter; but I believe that if a crowd were suddenly landed on the islands it is possible there might be a shortage of food. But the Government Residents could make an appeal to humanity, and we would never see the kanakas starve.

9765. But do you not think Australia should see that they are not sent to the islands to run the risk of an appeal to humanity—Should they not be either deported so gradually as not to bring about a famine, or else be provided with a supply of food when they get to the islands? I believe in giving them a supply of food in the islands, with white men in charge to see that they do not rush the stores.

9766. So long as the supplies lasted, would they grow anything? I would only dole out the supplies in case of necessity.

9767. Can you tell us anything more that would be of assistance to us? I listened to my brother's evidence, and mine is practically the same; but, owing to my absence in Brisbane, I am not so conversant with the subject as I was previously. While I was engaged in the industry I found nothing in it that an average white man could not do. I have trashed, cut cane, navvied, wharf-lumped, fenced, and mined, and during my residence of seventeen years in Cairns I have been healthier than ever I was out of it.

9768. Are you a married man? No.

9769. You agree with the evidence given by your brother? Yes; I do not think I can add anything to what he said.

9770. *By Mr. Paget*: Is it your intention to continue growing cane by white labour under the present conditions? If the Colonial Sugar Refining Company will give me a satisfactory price, that is my intention.

9771. Do you consider the maintenance of the bonus a necessity to enable you to pay the wages you are now paying to white men? Yes; or, if the protection is left, it should go to the grower and not to the manufacturer.

9772. You require protection in one form or another? Yes.

9773. *By Mr. Nielson:* Are there any Crown lands of decent quality available? Not in close proximity to the mills. J. Mann,
M.L.A.
9774. Say within forty miles? There may be at Atherton, which is not forty miles in a direct line, although it is sixty-eight miles by rail. There may be Crown lands there ten miles from the railway, but they will not grow sugar, although they are good agricultural lands; and they would require a bit of capital, as the scrub is very hard to clear. 7 May, 1906.
9775. Are large areas held in this district privately, of which no use is being made? There are large areas on the Russell River. I believe they are being held in anticipation of another mill.
9776. *By Mr. Paget:* But the owners expect to utilise those lands for the cultivation of cane, if they can get a mill? Yes.

Assool, a native of Tanna Island, examined:

9777. *By the Chairman:* How long have you been in Queensland? Twenty-nine years this year. Assool
9778. You work now or walk about? I get few jobs, but they only small jobs, and people frightened to employ me. 7 May, 1906.
9779. You married? No.
9780. You got ticket? No.
9781. You want to go alonga Tanna? No. I have been too long in this country, and I no want to go back.
9782. Friend belonging to you in the islands all dead? Some of them.
9783. Suppose you no go back to Tanna, what you do—Have you got money in the bank? No; no money.
9784. If you got no money, and white man no give you job, which way you think you get ki-ki? If I cannot get a job I have to go back to my country.
9785. You want to go back to your country? I want to stop, but if they send me I will go back.
9786. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you speak for all of the "boys" outside? They never say anything to me.
9787. *By the Chairman:* Some "boys" say that if the Government give them land to grow potatoes, it would suit them—Would that do for you? Yes; that very good.
9788. The "boys" at Proserpine and Rockhampton said they would like to be settled altogether on a reserve, where they could grow things for themselves? That is very good.
9789. You would like that? Yes.
9790. How long would it take you to make a farm and grow ki-ki for one man? Ten months.
9791. Ten months from what part of the year—from Easter or Christmas? Ten months from the time I get there.
9792. You do not want to go back to islands, where you run about without any clothes? No; I do not want to go there.
9793. You do not want to give up civilisation? No.
9794. You missionary "boy"? Yes.
9795. Which mission? English Church.
9796. You do not want to go back and become same as wild man? No.
9797. *By Mr. Paget:* You bushman or salt-water man? I belong to salt water.
9798. You want a job now? Yes.
9799. You cannot find a job? No.
- 9799A. *By Mr. Nielson:* You work alonga sugar? Yes; if I can get 'em.
9800. *By the Chairman:* What for you no get em job? I cannot get em because they register for white cane.
9801. *By Mr. Nielson:* Plenty of missionary in Tanna? Yes.
9802. Plenty white men too? I been long time in this country.
9803. Plenty of "boys" in Tanna have got clothes? Yes.
9804. Suppose you get job in Tanna, you go back? Yes.

Tom Low, Native of Malo Island, examined:

9805. *By the Chairman:* How long you been in Queensland? Fifteen years. Tom Low.
9806. You married? No. 7 May, 1906.
9807. You work now? No work.
9808. Why is that? No find em job.
9809. What for white man no give em job? They don't give jobs alonga "boy" now. They only give work to white men.
9810. You got any money? Yes.
9811. Little bit? Yes.
9812. In Savings Bank? Yes, in Savings Bank in Bundaberg.
9813. You want to go home? Yes, if ship come here, I go home.
9814. Suppose ship come to Lucinda Point, you go there? Yes; if there is plenty of room I will go.
9815. Did the other "boys" tell you to talk for them? Yes.
9816. They say they want to go home if ship come? Yes.
9817. You want ship to come to Cairns? Yes; some "boys" at Hambledon.
9818. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many Malayta "boys" stop here? Plenty.
9819. They like to go home? Some like to go, and some like to stop.
9820. Why do they not want to go? They have got no money. They spend all their money in tucker.
9821. *By the Chairman:* How much money "boy" want to fill box? "Boy" want to buy books and calico.
9822. *By Mr. Nielson:* Bicycle, too? Yes.
9823. *By Mr. Paget:* Sewing machine, too? Yes.
9824. *By the Chairman:* How much money do they want for a good box? £8 or £10.
9825. *By Mr. Nielson:* £5 some fellow? Yes.
9826. Where did you work alonga Bundaberg? Mr. Young, at Fairymead. Me nine years in Bundaberg, then me go home and come back again to Fairymead.
9827. Did Miss Young not tell you she got missionary alonga Malayta now? They very quiet now at Malayta. They can write English and read the Bible.

Tom Low.

7 May, 1906.

Mr. Wilson: This "boy" claims to have £34 in the bank, a bicycle, and he has a stock of Bibles. When I last saw him he had £2 5s. worth of Bibles.

Examination resumed:

9828. *By Mr. Nielson:* Mr. Caulfeild stop alonga Malayta? Yes.
 9829. *By the Chairman:* You sarree "pas-age" Fiu? Yes. I go round there.
 9830. What sort of place is it? Good ground there.
 9831. *By Mr. Paget:* Good fellow ground make garden? Just same ground as in Queensland.
 9832. Much fellow water stop alonga him? Big creek at the back.
 9833. *By the Chairman:* Plenty fever sit down there? Too much fever there. No cold—only fever.
 9834. All white men get fever first time? Two missionaries, get fever and one missionary die.
 9835. Suppose "boy" stop long time in Queensland and go back, he get fever? Yes.
 9836. Fever only make him sick? Yes. "Boy" alonga bush too wild. One missionary "boy" teach in bush, and one "boy" been shoot him and kill him.
 9837. *By Mr. Paget:* He "Ki-ki" him? I believe so. I no see him.
 9838. *By Mr. Nielson:* Father belonga you big man in your village? Yes.
 9839. Plenty brothers and sisters stop you? Yes.
 9840. They no want you to go back? Of course, I go home they very glad.
 9841. Your father missionary "boy," too? He not know anything about missionary.
 9842. Do you not think you should go home and teach them? One missionary teach them now.
 9843. Have you any land there? I have 15 acres at Malo, near Fiu.

FOONAH, Pacific Islander, examined:

Foonah.

7 May, 1906.

9844. *By the Chairman:* What island do you belong to? Guadalcanar.
 9845. How long have you been in Queensland? Eighteen years.
 9846. Do you want to go home? I want to go next year.
 9847. Why do you not want to go this year? I have no money.
 9848. How much money do you want to fill box? I want to earn 25s. a week.
 9849. But you want to get box to take home? I want wages.
 9850. *By Mr. Nielson:* How much money do you want to earn before you go home? £20.
 9851. Suppose you earn £20 you go home? Yes.
 9852. *By the Chairman:* You work now? No.
 9853. Why? No job.
 9854. Why no job? They say no more work alonga sugar-cane.
 9855. You think if big fellow master let you work you work? Yes.
 9856. *By Mr. Nielson:* You think you should be paid 25s. a week? I earn 25s. a week this year.
 9857. *By Mr. Paget:* Master buy tucker? Yes.
 9858. Find shirt, and trousers, and tobacco, too? Yes, anything.
 9859. *By the Chairman:* You want 25s. a week and tucker? Yes. This time I earn more—new law, you know.
 9860. *By Mr. Nielson:* Suppose nobody give you job, what will you do? I got little bit money. A while ago I have a contract. I work free now.
 9861. You are not a ticket "boy"? No; I work at what people give me.
 9862. *By the Chairman:* Are you a missionary "boy"? No.

WILLIAM PETTIGREW WILSON, Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders, examined:

W. P. Wilson.

7 May, 1906.

9863. *By the Chairman:* You are Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders? Yes.
 9864. How long have you been here? About two mouths. Before coming here I had three and a-half years' experience in Geraldton.
 9865. What you give us your evidence in your own way? You may say that all the Solomon Islanders want to go home. The few isolated cases of "boys" from that group who do not want to go home, I find from the other "boys," have transgressed against island customs. Nearly all the New Hebrides "boys" that I have met have been in Queensland for a considerable time, and have got out of their island methods of living to such an extent that they are afraid to go back now. They give me to understand that they cannot adapt themselves to the island conditions after such a lengthy residence in Queensland; but they are willing to go home in missionary groups.
 9866. *By Mr. Nielson:* To missionary stations? Yes. You will find that most of the New Hebrides "boys" round the North have married aboriginal gins. When they were married to these "boys," the local protector always made the gin understand that if the "boy" was sent back she would have to go to the island with him.
 9867. *By Mr. Paget:* Were these people married in the church or by local custom? Some were married in the church, and some by an authorised justice. I know twenty instances in the Johnstone River district.
 9868. They are all legally married? Some are not.
 9869. But those you speak of are? Yes. They got frightened of the missionaries, and then went to the protector and got married. Nearly every islander I have met in the North, with the exception of a few New Hebrides men, is anxious to go back at some time. The only trouble is that they want to go back with a little money. The state of the kanaka labour market has been very much against them. They have been that long out of work that they have used up the little bit of money that they had saved. Lately there has been almost a stream of "boys" withdrawing their Savings Bank money. This is May, and thrashing is commencing, and the "boys" used to rely on getting work at this time, but now they cannot get it.
 9870. Owing to what circumstances? Firstly, because some of the farmers have registered for white cane; and, secondly, because of a departmental regulation that has come up stating that the last employer will have to pay the extra cost of the "boys" passage to his island above £5 and his coastal passage money to the ship. That extra cost would come heavy on a farmer who only employed a "boy" for five or six months.
 9871. *By Mr. Nielson:* Would not a reduction in wages meet it? Some of the farmers have not seen it that way. I have signed on some "boys" at £15, which is the minimum fixed by the department.

9872. *By the Chairman:* Would the "boys" rather take that wage than withdraw their Savings Bank money? Some of them would. The principal trouble is that the ship should be brought up here. There are plenty of "boys" who will go home if the ship is brought up here. W. P. Wilson.
7 May, 1906.

9873. *By Mr. Nielson:* When the ships leave other ports, do you get timely notice? No; I do not. That is what I would like.

9874. *By the Chairman:* Would you recommend that a ship should start loading here and put aboard as many as are willing to go? Yes; there would be no difficulty in getting "boys" to go then, as they object to pay the coastal passage to Bundaberg, and then be shut out there.

9875. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you written to your department to this effect? I have written to private people. I wrote to Williams and Brand. I also told the inspector at Geraldton at the time, and I mentioned it to Mr. Grant here, and said that if we could only get a ship here it would be all right.

9876. Would it not be advisable, with the experience you had at Geraldton, for you to send a written memorandum on this subject? I fully intend to do so. I was going to ask particularly for more definite information about the ships. For instance, Mr. Williams sends me a wire saying that the "Sydney Belle" will leave in a month's time, and asks, "Can you offer any returns?" The "boys" are so sick-minded that I cannot tell just at once whether I shall have a number or not.

9877. *By Mr. Nielson:* If a ship called here, the "boys" would all leave? Yes. They get a longing to go, and they will go.

9878. *By the Chairman:* They should start here, and load, and work down? Yes; that would be a very good way, but the traders do not like that.

9879. We are talking of what is good for the trade and not for the traders? The people who charter the boats have kanaka stores of their own in Maryborough and Bundaberg, and they want to work out their own stock. That is one of the reasons why they do not like the ships to start loading up here. Another reason is that if they start loading here the shippers will have to send a man up or appoint an agent here.

9880. They could easily send up a man as supercargo? Yes; but they do not like to. I would point out that inside a couple of months a lot of these "boys" will be destitute. I was at Atherton the other day, and I was told that there were thirty "boys" employed there felling scrub. They are illegally employed, but I cannot get at them. The "boys" here told me about the others being illegally employed.

9881. *By Mr. Nielson:* Why could you not get at them? Several of the "boys" knew me, and as soon as they heard the word "Government" they disappeared. The "boys" want to stop there and make good money.

9882. Cannot you put someone else on? Someone would need to be sent up specially.

9883. Have you any power to employ a man? No. I was told that seventeen "boys" went up to Scrubby Creek the week before last.

9884. *By Mr. Paget:* I suppose that is on the way to the South Sea Islands? They are determined to get work somewhere.

9885. Is it true that twenty-seven left for the Seymour a week ago? I heard so from some of the "boys."

9886. *By the Chairman:* Where is the Seymour? Between here and Port Douglas.

9887. *By Mr. Paget:* What work are they going to do? The Chinamen are starting banana plantations there.

9888. *By Mr. Nielson:* Are these matters reported to your head office in Brisbane? I told Mr. Grant about it this morning. There are other "boys" here who are being illegally employed cutting firewood.

9889. Do you know the owners of the land where they are working? No. I only know it is about six miles along on the third section of the Mulgrave tramway.

9890. Do you not know the place? No. I have a lot of work to do here. I am assistant clerk of petty sessions, and I have been engaged in the court.

9891. *By the Chairman:* Mr. Purdy, a missionary, gives us a list of eighteen islanders whom he knows to be married—Do you think if you sent to the Mulgrave and Hambleton that you could get a correct list of the number of married islanders? Yes; but it would take a lot of time. If the police were asked they could get it. I would like to make a suggestion how to employ the "boys" while they are awaiting deportation. They could be engaged in clearing the Atherton Scrub.

9892. Is there any land there? Yes; near Lake Eacham. The first cost in connection with an agricultural farm is clearing the scrub. The Atherton scrub country is just as heavy as Queensland tropical scrub, and the "boys" could easily be employed there. If a selector gets a few acres of scrub down when he is starting, he can get in and can start growing food for pigs. Five acres might be cleared by the "boys" off each place. From what I know the Government will have to feed some of these "boys," and they might employ them at that, and get some return for their money.

9893. *By Mr. Paget:* You think the Government should utilise this kanaka labour in the same manner that a large number of unemployed have been utilised in the South in the last twelve months? Yes.

9894. In connection with the so-called public estate improvement fund? Yes.

9895. *By the Chairman:* How far would the Atherton Scrub be from the canegrowing land? 22 miles. The climate is not suitable for canegrowing there.

9896. But the settlers there could supply the labour for the canegrowers in the Hambleton and the Mulgrave? There is nothing to prevent them doing work in the sugar districts.

9897. Would it be a lonely place for their wives and children to live there? It depends on the number in the group. I know one man, named Lennox, who went to Croydon engine-driving, and he left his wife and five children living in the scrub. He left them living 6 miles in the scrub. With regard to the deportation the sooner a ship can be put on the better. If a ship were put on within a month from now to do Port Douglas and Cairns, the "boys" could come here from Lucinda Point.

9898. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think you could fill a vessel with a capacity of 130? You could send away eighty or ninety. The "Clansman" ought to be back soon.

9899. *By the Chairman:* When will the "Lady Norman" be back? She can do a trip in six weeks. With favourable winds she can come across here in six days. By the time she returns, the "boys" will be only too ready to go. The thing is to get a boat before they scatter. They are scattering now. There are many farmers in the Atherton district who cannot make a good living on the small area they have cleared, and they cannot get the scrub down quick enough. If "boys" were put on to clear land for them, the cost of clearing might be treated as an advance from the Agricultural Bank. Some farmers desire assistance in that way.

(Nelson—Mulgrave Central Sugar Mill.)

THURSDAY, 10 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*)

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

REUBEN SMITH, Acting Sergeant of Police, examined:

- R. Smith. 9900. *By the Chairman*: How long have you been stationed here? I arrived on the 27th January, 1902, and I have been here since.
- 10 May, 1906. 9901. Are you acting clerk of petty sessions? No; there is no court of petty sessions here.
9902. Do you issue relief rations? Yes.
9903. You have an opportunity of knowing what unemployed are about from time to time? Yes.
9904. Do you communicate with the Government Labour Bureau? No.
9905. At the present time what is the state of the labour market as regards unemployed in this district? During the last two months there have been far more men unemployed about here than ever I saw before.
9906. *By Mr. Paget*: You mean white men? Yes; white men.
9907. *By the Chairman*: Can you form an estimate of the numbers? It is difficult to form an estimate, as they come and go and just pass through the town.
9908. They do not camp round the town? Sometimes.
9909. Do the men passing through apply to you for relief? Very few of them apply for relief.
9910. Would you say what the average is per week? I should say eight or ten.
9911. Are they going inland? Most of them seem to be making for Geraldton. Sometimes there are more and sometimes less.
9912. Are there any men camped about the town just now? Very few.
9913. What class of men are they as regards temperance; have you any trouble with them? There are some drunkards and some otherwise amongst them.
9914. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do the bulk of them appear to be honest working men? I should say 80 per cent. would be what you would call good working men.
9915. *By Mr. Paget*: A large number of men are employed in the mill in the crushing season? Yes.
9916. How do they strike you as regards temperance and general sobriety? I have worked on the railways myself, and I have done police duty on the railways, and I consider the men here are more temperate than ordinary navvies. I have very little trouble with them in a police capacity.
9917. *By the Chairman*: Are there many of the loafing class amongst them? I have not seen many of them.
9918. Not an undue proportion? No; but they are everywhere, just the same as they are among shearers and other classes.
9919. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you form an estimate of the number of unemployed who have been camped here within the last two months, or since the last crushing season? No. They are so irregular. They come one day, and next day they go to Geraldton. Then they come back again and go to Wolfram. They come here and go round the farms, and if they cannot get work they are off again. They do not make a practice of camping.
9920. *By Mr. Nielson*: The mill here has been advertising for men for some time past in various newspapers? Yes.
9921. Have many men been put on as a result of those advertisements? I do not know of any who have been put on.
9922. Have many applied to be put on? Several men told me that they came here in consequence of the advertisement, and they could not get work.
9923. *By the Chairman*: Recently? Yes.
9924. Did they give any reason to show you why they could not be employed? No; they just said that they could not get a job.
9925. Did they strike you as being men who were worth employing? A large percentage of them did.
9926. *By Mr. Nielson*: Can you give any idea of the number of men about here just now? No; I have not been about the town much lately. I have been in the outside district for the last few days.
9927. Can you tell us if there has been a surplus of men here during the crushing season? I think so. I never heard any complaint about the absence of labour.
9928. *By the Chairman*: Does the mill employ kanakas at all? Not about the mill.
9929. Have they gangs for cutting? Yes. They have had a number of kanakas and a good few Hindoos employed in the last couple of seasons.
9930. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you collect statistics regarding the registration of white labour-grown cane for the Customs? Yes.
9931. A much greater area has been registered this year than has hitherto been registered? I know the area registered this year is very considerable, but I cannot tell you how much. I think half the land in the district is registered for bounty. A lot of it was registered owing to the concession granted by the Customs Department up till the 21st January of this year.
9932. So there will be a considerable number more white men required this year than what there have been in other years? Yes.
9933. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you any idea of how many men worked here last season cutting cane? I cannot tell you that.
9934. Can you tell me whether the charges of drunkenness during the crushing season were very great? No. The millhands and the cane-cutters are a little above the average, so far as I can see. But there are a lot of loafers and drunkards who come up here who do not work at all.
9935. *By the Chairman*: Out in the Western country there is always a proportion of loafers with every mob? It is just the same here.

9936. They are fellows who do not come to work, but come to live on the others? Yes. I would like to mention that with regard to the cane gang here I have had no occasion to interfere with any of them since they started.

R. Smith.

10 May, 1906.

9937. Are they white men? Yes.

9938. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many are there? Eighteen or twenty.

9939. *By the Chairman*: Are they here now? They are mostly residents.

9940. And all respectable men? Yes.

9941. Are there many married men living here? Not very many.

9942. Are you a married man? Yes.

9943. Any family? Yes.

9944. Has your wife good health? Yes, and I have three children who will compare with anything in Queensland. I have got a boy twelve years of age who weighs 7 st. 12 lb. My own health is as good here as ever it was in Victoria, where I was born.

9945. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do white residents, and particularly women and children, enjoy good health? Yes. The birth rate is increasing considerably of late.

9946. *By the Chairman*: Is the death rate anything exceptional? No.

9947. Do you know whether young girls have fairly good health? Yes. We have better health here than we had in Cairns, where I lived for nearly two years. My health was not too good there. The climate here is considerably better.

9948. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think there will be a sufficient number of white men in the district or likely to come here for the next harvesting season? That is rather a hard thing for me to say; but if the men who have been passing through the district were employed during the slack season at a low rate of wages, there would be sufficient labour available.

9949. *By the Chairman*: Do you think men would take a low rate of wages? I think so. A lot of them took rations from me.

9950. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is any trashing done here? I do not think anyone who is registered for the bounty has had his cane trashed.

9951. Is it usual in this district to trash? It was in the past when they were using black labour.

9952. Are there many kanakas here at present? There were six weeks ago; but there do not appear to be too many about now. I think most of them have cleared out to Geraldton and Atherton.

9953. *By the Chairman*: There is no cane grown at Atherton? No.

9954. Will they be working up there? I have heard that they are illegally employed.

HUGH NIVEN, Cane Farmer and Labourer, examined:

9955. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am managing for my mother just now, and I am following ordinary labouring work. I have only started this year.

H. Niven.

9956. What is the area of the farm you are managing? 100 odd acres.

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9957. Is there much of it under cane? Only about 20 acres.

9958. Was any cut last year? Yes.

9959. How much? We have only recently leased it. It was cut last year by Mrs. Möller.

9960. Do you lease it on a royalty? No; it is leased as a block.

9961. How long have you been working among cane? Ever since cane was registered. Mr. Petersen was the first to register at Hambledon in 1902, and I had charge of the gang.

9962. Have you done all descriptions of cane work? Yes.

9963. Have you done any chipping? Yes. I did four or five months' chipping recently.

9964. Have you done any chipping in any other part of the country? Not a great lot. I have been here about fifteen years.

9965. Have you found it specially laborious work? No. It is not so hard as navvying work in a cutting, or shovelling muck or ballast. Cane-cutting is easy. The loading is a bit tiresome, as you have to go backwards and forwards over the trash.

9966. But it does not take as much out of you as navvying? Not if you work the same hours, but you generally work ten hours a day at cane-cutting.

9967. Is there any reason why a man should not do farm work all the year round? He can do it easily enough, but he cannot always get it.

9968. Have you had fairly good health? Yes. Most of the men who have worked with us in the gangs have always been healthy enough.

9969. Is this a climate in which an average healthy man can do hard work? Most certainly it is. I have worked in the hottest weather in the hottest jobs—filling ballast and working in railway cuttings—and I am only a weak little morsel.

9970. Are you a sober man? Yes. I have a drink occasionally, but I have never been intoxicated in my life.

9971. Will the fact that a man is temperate or intemperate have any effect on his health? It may have, but I have seen any amount of men who take intoxicants who are just as healthy as I am. They may want a day or two off to recruit after a bit of a hoose.

9972. Are you a married man? No.

9973. Have you any brothers or sisters? Two younger brothers are with me on the farm. My two elder sisters are married, and the youngest is at school.

9974. Do they enjoy good health? Fairly good health. We find the Mulgrave very healthy.

9975. Do you know that people have written to the Press describing the climate as most unhealthy? That is not true. It is a splendid climate. Lord Hopetoun, the first Governor-General of the Commonwealth, said he never had better health than he enjoyed in the district. I would like to make some complaints with regard to the number of unemployed. There are a tremendous number of unemployed, and work that ought to be given to them in the slack season is given to blacks, and gangs are also being signed on down South. They are advertising in the South for men.

9976. *By Mr. Paget*: Where are they advertising? I have seen through the columns of the *Worker* that one of the directors of the Mossman mill wired down for men to be sent there.

9977. That matter was thrashed out at the Mossman? Yes.

- H. Niven. 9978. We are in the Mulgrave now—Are there a number of unemployed here? Yes: a lot came in last week with their swags.
- 10 May, 1906. 9979. *By the Chairman:* From which direction? The majority of them came from over the range.
- 9979a. From the mining districts? Yes; they were lured here by the advertisement in the paper.
9980. Is it appearing now? Yes; there is a standing advertisement in the *Trinity Times* saying that labour is wanted, yet when local men make application for a job, they are told that sufficient men have been engaged.
9981. *By Mr. Nielson:* And there is a standing advertisement in the paper asking for more? Yes; I saw it there last week.
9982. And you object to it? Yes; there is a certain amount of work here that can be given to white labour, but it is subtle to Japs and kanakas and Hindoos. If we want to encourage the white man to come here, he should be given all these jobs; and when Japs and Hindoos are put on in preference it gives the place a bad name.
9983. *By the Chairman:* Then the persons interested in keeping white labour in the district should, as far as possible, give all their work to white labour? Certainly they should. All that work can be done by white men. The woodcutting can be done by white men.
9984. Perhaps they have a large stock of wood in hand? No; at the present time Japs are cutting wood for them. With regard to the depopulation of the kanakas, I would like to point out that the officials are telling the kanakas who are married that they cannot go back home. One kanaka married to an aboriginal woman, and one or two others I was in conversation with, told me that. I asked them if they were going home to their islands, and they said they were not allowed to go back, as they had got wives and children.
9985. *By Mr. Paget:* What officials are you alluding to? I cannot tell you. I asked the kanakas, "Who told you that?" and they said, "Government." They always mean the officials when they say "Government." They refer to the officials that they do business with.
9986. *By the Chairman:* Are there many kanakas leasing land here for canegrowing? I do not know of any. There are Hindoos who lease land along the line. They are not canegrowing, but are cultivating other crops, and they have the kanakas engaged picking peanuts for them.
9987. Would it be advantageous to employ the men at trashing in the meantime—that is, the men who will be required by and by in the crushing? They always are employed for the trashing. Those who have registered for the bonus always employ white men for the trashing.
9988. Then why are they not employed now? They may have more men than they require. A few can do the trashing and pull all the rough leaves off. Trashing is the most disagreeable part in the cutting of cane.
9989. Is it a fact that the unemployed will not take up the trashing? There may be some, but there are always plenty who will do it, provided they get sufficient wages.
9990. Is trashing not generally done by contract? Yes.
9991. What is it worth? £1 an acre is little enough for any trashing, though 17s. 6d. an acre is sometimes paid. The prices paid run up to about £1 an acre.
9992. A good deal would depend on the weight of the crop? Yes; and if the crop is standing up you can cut it much more easily than if it is lying down. A crop that has been blown down is much more trouble to cut.
9993. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is there less trashing being done here this year than formerly? I have been away from here for some time.
9994. *By the Chairman:* Is there any Crown land about here that people would be likely to take up if they could get it? There is very little but what is taken up. It is practically all taken up. There are acres and acres of land between here and Geraldton which is in private hands, and yet none of it is cultivated.
9995. Is it good land? It is standing virgin scrub. In the Russell River district the Government took over some land, cut it up, and leased it out.
9996. We have had it suggested to us that men might be settled on comparatively small areas to make a home there so that their labour would be available in the district? Yes.
9997. Is there any land in this district that would be available for such a purpose as that? There is none held by the Crown.
9998. Within 10 miles of here? There is none even within 20 miles. The only land that I know of that has not been taken up here is a camping reserve which has been cut up into blocks of 7 acres, but none of the blocks have been taken up.
9999. Is there much there? I do not suppose there will be a couple of hundred acres altogether, if there is that much.
10000. *By Mr. Paget:* How long ago was it surveyed? Last year or the year before. It is under the control of the shire council.
10001. *By the Chairman:* The shire council divided it up? No, the Government. Comparatively speaking, there is very little land there, and it would not settle many men.
10002. It would settle thirty families? It might settle that many. The men from Atherton have spoken about coming down here to work.
10003. How far is it from here to the Atherton Scrub? 30 miles.
10004. Is there a road there? There is a track for packhorses.
10005. Is all the land there opened to selection yet? There are surveyors up there now. But that is nearly 40 miles from here.
10006. *By Mr. Paget:* Is that the land at Lake Eacham? I do not know. It may be 6 or 8 miles nearer.
10007. *By the Chairman:* Would it be too far for a man to leave his family at Lake Eacham and come here to work? I would leave my family there if I had to do it, but a man does not care about going away and leaving his family. A man likes to be with his family, and does not care about leaving them in the scrub without the facilities for getting food. We settled first in the Mulgrave Scrub, and there were no other settlers within 3 or 4 miles of us, and the mill shut down eighteen months after we settled. We were there for five or six years before another settler came.
10008. You lived through it all right? Yes.
10009. And many men have lived through worse than that? Yes.

GEORGE MILEOX, General Labourer, examined:

G. Milroy.

10 May, 1906.

10010. *By the Chairman:* Are you a permanent resident here or a stranger? I have been here for three years now.

10011. What are you working at at present? I am not doing anything just now.

10012. Is it your own will or because you can get nothing to do? I do not choose to do the work offering here. I might have been able to get it if I accepted a day here and a day there, but I did not choose to do it.

10013. Have you a family living here? Yes.

10014. What family have you? One child.

10015. Have your wife and child been here for three years? Yes.

10016. It is apparently because you cannot get a permanent job that you are unemployed? If I could get anything that would last me a few weeks I would take it.

10017. You will not take a job for a day here and there? No. I would not take a permanent job on the wages they are offering.

10018. What are the wages? 2s. a week and rations.

10019. You can get that anywhere? No. Some pay £1 and some £1 2s. 6d. a week. It is not weekly wages, because they only pay 4s. 2d. a day.

10020. *By Mr. Paget:* Can you plough? I cannot call myself a ploughman. Whatever ploughing I did was at home; but I could not call myself a ploughman.

10021. *By the Chairman:* Do you farm land yourself? I come from the Darling Downs. I was born there.

10022. Do you prefer this climate to the Downs climate? If I could get work here it would be all right. Of course if I went over the range looking for work, and I got it, my wife would be left here, and she would get what she wanted to eat.

10023. But you do not choose to leave her in that position? No.

10024. Have you tried to get a job at cane trashing? No. They do not pay anything for it.

10025. What do they pay for trashing cane? They have not fixed any price yet, but the price at the Mossman is 13s. per acre; but there are hundreds of acres of which you could not trash one acre a week.

10026. *By Mr. Paget:* The Mossman people told us that their price is 17s. 6d. an acre? Well, one man proposes to pay 14s. an acre.

10027. *By the Chairman:* Is there much unemployed labour about here at present? I do not think there is.

10028. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you appearing as a representative of the Sugar Workers' Union? I am.

10029. Are you the secretary? Yes.

10030. *By the Chairman:* I suppose you have a salary as secretary? No. At present I shoot a few wallabies to knock out a bit of tucker for myself. That is all I have done since we finished cutting in the first week in November.

10031. Do you think there will be any scarcity of labour next season? No; but the cry of the employers is that there will be.

10032. You expect men will come for the crushing season? Hundreds of men have passed through the district within the last couple of months to my knowledge. They came with the intention of getting a bit of work in the slack season. There has been an advertisement in the papers for cane cutters for months.

10033. When they came here the mill would not engage them? No.

10034. Why did the mill not offer them any temporary work? I could not say; but when I approached Mr. Davids he informed me that he could not offer me anything, as he was full-handed.

10035. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you secretary of the local branch of the union or of the Cairns branch? This is the headquarters of the Cairns branch.

10036. How many financial members have you in the union? About 400.

10037. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think that your position as secretary of the union has any influence in preventing you getting a job? I do think so. Before I was secretary I was always a staunch supporter of fair wages, and I think I was practically boycotted. I put in a tender for cutting firewood which was not accepted. I approached Mr. Davids, thinking I might work with the contractor. The meeting of directors took place on the Monday night, and on the Wednesday when I saw Mr. Davids he told me he could not let me know who got the contract; but the next day I saw that a gang of Hindoos was sent out to the man who got the contract.

10038. *By Mr. Paget:* Was it a white man who got the contract? Yes, a farmer at Alooomba.

10039. Did he engage the Hindoos himself? Yes.

10040. *By Mr. Nielson:* What were they doing previously? I do not know. Of course they had been cutting cane during the season, but I think they were idle at the time.

10041. How is off season work, such as firewood cutting, done? I think white men have supplied about 600 cords this year, and the blacks and Japanese have supplied about 2,000 cords.

10042. *By Mr. Paget:* Are the blacks and Japanese permanently in the employment of the mill company? No.

10043. They are simply contractors? No; like myself, they are walking about, and they are employed by the contractors.

10044. *By the Chairman:* What was the difference between the price at which you tendered and the price at which these coloured men cut the firewood? The Hindoos have been loading firewood that kanakas cut last slack season?

10045. What did you tender at? There were two different prices. I proposed to deliver wood on trucks on the tramline for 12s. 9d. per cord, provided they supplied me with sufficient portable line, or 14s. 9d. in the yard.

10046. Do you know the price of the successful tenderer? I think it was 12s. 9d. delivered in the yard. 10047. Was it your intention to do the work with white labour? Yes. Of course I would not have been employing much labour, as I was only tendering for 1,000 cords. I intended to put on white men by contract. Some of the wood which has been delivered at 12s. 9d. a cord was cut by white labour.

- G. Milroy. 10048. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are the members of your union men who have followed work in the Cairns district? They have all worked in the district.
- 10 May, 1906. 10049. Do you expect the majority of them to turn up for the next season? I do not. They have no encouragement. I do not suppose I shall be here myself. I am proposing to send my wife South next Wednesday, and I am going over the range.
10050. What do you mean when you say that they have no encouragement to turn up? The price for cutting has been reduced. I reckon it is a reduction. We got equal to 4s. 9d. a ton for cutting and loading last year in a good crop of slightly more than the mill average of 17 tons. Most of that cane we would have been cutting for 3s. 6d. this year.
10051. *By Mr. Paget*: Is that the price they are offering as against 4s. 9d.? Not actually. Most of the cane we would have cut for 3s. 6d., but we got 4s. 9d. all round. It was 6s. a ton to cut, trash, and load.
10052. You think trashing is worth about 1s. to 1s. 3d. a ton? It comes to about 1s. 3d. a ton.
10053. *By the Chairman*: You told us that there were not many unemployed white men at present; you also said that you think there will not be any scarcity of labour in the future; and yet you say that the men will all go away? There are too many men knocking about the country who will take their place.
10054. We cannot hear of them? It is only three weeks last Saturday night since there was a dance in this hall. Although I know nearly every man living in the district, there were more strangers present than men I knew; but they are not here now—they have gone again.
10055. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think they will come back again when the crushing season starts? Some of them may.
10056. Where are the members of your union now? Some of them are over the range, some are in Bundaberg, and others are at Charters Towers and Ravenswood.
10057. Are they all working? Most of those whose whereabouts I know are working.
10058. Have they any intention of coming back? Two of them have written saying they intend to come back. One of them was the secretary of the union during the last crushing, and he proposed to bring eleven of his friends from Queanbeyan, in New South Wales, with him. I wrote back that there were any amount of chances of getting work, but since then I have seen any number of men knocking about. However, it is too late now to let him know, because they are on the road.
10059. *By Mr. Paget*: You know there is a large number of kanakas who may be deported next year; do you think there are sufficient men knocking about to fill their places? I do not think so, unless the farmers alter their prices. Single men who can get away do not intend to come back, because the work is not remunerative. I would not have been here after the first year if I could have got away.
10060. Do you think there is sufficient labour available, provided sufficient inducements are offered? I do.
10061. It is estimated there will be between 5,000 and 6,000 kanakas in Queensland at the end of the year; how many white men would be required to take their places? I have no experience of the kanakas. They tell me that he is a better man than the white man, but I do not think that. I think 4,000 white men will be sufficient to fill the place of 6,000 kanakas.
10062. Do you think there will be that number available, over and above the number of white men now employed in the industry? Yes, unless something unforeseen occurs to take them away, such as the discovery of a new mining field. I have travelled over a big portion of Queensland, and a good deal of New South Wales, and I have always found a lot of unemployed.
10063. Do you mean real working men, and not men who do not want work? I mean honest, hard-working men.
10064. Do you think the stamp of men coming into this district is improving? I landed here three years ago last April. The class of labour that came here the first year I was here were as good as the men who come here now. I dropped into work as soon as I came here and did not have much time to look round. The men who follow the mill work follow it all the year round. The men who come to cut cane come from the mining districts, and those I saw were as good as the men who come here now.
10065. *By Mr. Nielson*: You do not think there is much difference between them? No.
10066. Have the numbers of men increased yearly since you have been here? Yes, they have.
10067. *By Mr. Paget*: That might be the result of the bonus? More farmers have registered, and there is more white labour. With regard to the men improving, there are some men who are utterly useless to the sugar industry or any other industry. They remain here, and the good men who come along cannot get anything to do, and they go somewhere else. They talk about these men here being unreliable, and there is no doubt they are. A lot of them loaf about during the crushing season, and do slack season work.
10068. From what cause are they unreliable? Drink, principally. I know some of them, and they are good working men when they are sober.
10069. *By Mr. Nielson*: I have seen the rules of your union—You have no provision for expelling a member? We have a rule under which we can prevent the issue of a ticket to any man.
10070. But can you expel a member? No.
10071. Would you not favour a rule to both refuse admission to a worker and subject him to expulsion if he is an unreliable worker by reason of intemperance? I think we shall eventually have to do that.
10072. You should do it immediately? There are other things that we want to get done first, and which are of a great deal more importance, so we cannot do it immediately. The men seem to be very backward here. For instance, the mill men are frightened of getting the sack if they identify themselves with the union in any way. They join the union, but they do not come to the meetings because they are afraid of losing their billets. The result is that our meetings lapse for want of a quorum. The whole business of the union is left for about five or six men to do, and it is a big thing for five or six men to voice the opinions of hundreds.
10073. Do you hold the same view that I do in this respect: that it would be to the benefit of the genuine sober worker if the intemperate member was not admitted to the union, or if he were expelled from the union on becoming intemperate after he joined? I do agree with that for this reason: that we could say to the farmers, "If you get men with the union ticket you will find they are reliable men." The farmers would see that, and would only employ union men. If a man showed his union ticket he would get employment, and in that way the farmers would be supporting the union. I would like to point out that I never saw sugar-cane growing until I came here, and after the first week I could cut as much cane as I can now.

10074. *By Mr. Paget*: It has been suggested to us that it might be a good thing if there were a system of discharges adopted in connection with the sugar industry, in the same way as in the pastoral industry? That would come hard on me at the present time. G. Milroy.
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10075. *By the Chairman*: But do you not think a discharge from your last employer would be a good thing to have? If they are inclined to boycott me, what sort of a discharge would they give me?
10076. *By Mr. Paget*: It has been suggested that it would be a good thing for employees? I do not favour it.
10077. *By Mr. Nielson*: You think the union ticket should be the guarantee? Yes; the union ticket should be the reference.
10078. *By the Chairman*: Are there any other points you would like to touch on? I am in favour of the sugar-growers forming an association to meet and confer with the Sugar Workers' Union.
10079. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are not all the farmers here practically members of the local Farmers' Association? I do not know.
10080. Has the branch of your union made any endeavour to approach the association in any way? No. We are trying to get the Mackay branch to join us so that we can confer amongst ourselves as to what we think is a fair rate. Then we shall be able to approach the Farmers' Association; but we cannot do it without first meeting the Mackay branch of the union.
10081. *By Mr. Paget*: The matter of rates has been practically thrashed out by the sugar-growers of Mackay through their association and the sugar workers of Mackay? We will not be satisfied as easily as they are. I would be sorry to cut cane for 30s. a week. I value my labour more than that.
10082. *By the Chairman*: If 30s. a week is good enough for another white man, is it not good enough for you? I do not know whether it is good enough for another man. I do not think it is.
10083. Are there any other points you wish to bring out? Yes; are you not trying to get over the difficulty of the labour?
10084. We want to devise a scheme by which labour can be attracted to and kept in the district? Well, to do that they want to pay them better wages. The first attraction is good wages.
10085. How will you keep them here when you get them? That is a bigger question. I think the establishment of homesteads over the range would do it.
10086. Do you know the country? No.
10087. Mr. Niven says there are no Crown lands over there? I was referring to the land at Atherton.
10088. You think the establishment of home-tears in the neighbourhood of Atherton would solve it? Yes; married men could settle there and go in for dairying.
10089. And would they come here and work in the cane-fields in the crushing season? Yes.
10090. What size would the homesteads be? 160 acres.
10091. *By Mr. Nielson*: Forest land? Yes. If they got scrub land where they could grow fodder for their cows, much less than that would do. They would work on their own places in the slack season, and come and work here in the crushing season. All the shearing on the Darling Downs was done by the farmers who were settled on little homesteads in that way, and the same thing would apply here. It is only a day's ride from Atherton down here. Then, again, there are men who can grow sugar-cane on their own land. There are any amount of farmers round here who have land that is suitable for a thing on.
10092. *By the Chairman*: But you cannot make the farmers sell their land? But they want the men.
10093. And you think it would be to their interests to lease the land to the workers? Yes. They say the sugar industry is ruined through the advent of the white men, and they should not value their land at such a great deal when others want to get some of it.
10094. Do you think it is a disadvantage to them to keep their land locked up and not utilised? I do. I know lots of farmers who have hundreds of acres, and some of their land is practically neglected.
10095. Could such a farmer not lease 20 or 30 acres of his land to another man? Yes; but they want too much. I know a man who is paying £6 an acre on grubbed land. Then he has to break it up and plant it and pay 2s. a ton royalty.
10096. *By Mr. Paget*: Does the royalty go towards the purchasing price? No. I do not know that he has more than a three years' lease, though he may have the right of renewal; but he cannot afford to pay £6 an acre. The farmers are asking too much for their land, and that is why there is not much being sold.
10097. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you wish to speak about? If the men in the mill want a night's dancing they have to come to this hall. They are just beside the hotel, and eventually they get too much drink.
10098. Is there a reading-room in connection with the mill? There is one just the other side of the "pub."
10099. Do you think it would be a good thing for the mill company to have one in connection with their own premises? Yes; and a hall, too. A lot of young fellows working in the mills like a bit of dancing.
10100. Would that help to keep the men sober and more contented? I think it would a little. Then I think the men should be paid in cash instead of by cheque, and if some facilities were given for them to bank money it would be an improvement.
10101. *By Mr. Paget*: Is there no savings bank here? No.
10102. *By the Chairman*: Do you think there should be a branch opened here on pay-days? Yes. If an officer came out from Cairns to receive deposits on pay day it would be a good thing. I know plenty of men whose intentions when they get their money is to save. If they were paid in cash they could purchase what they required and bank the rest, but when they are paid by cheque they have to go to the publican to charge it.
10103. Is there no storekeeper here? He may not have sufficient money, but the publicans always have.
10104. Have you any suggestions to make with regard to the deportation of the kanaka? With regard to the proposal that has been made to employ them in clearing Government land, why could not the surplus white men clear it?
10105. *By Mr. Paget*: If the kanakas have to be deported next year, they must be dependent upon somebody for some time, as 5,000 or 6,000 cannot be put on board a couple of steamers and sent away on 1st January next? Look at the number of employers who depended on the kanakas. Let the kanakas be dependent on them now.

G. Milroy. 10106. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is the Labour Bureau much availed of? I never knew there was one.
 10107. Do you think that a bureau, systematically arranged, would be of service to white workers? I think it would be of great assistance. It would probably prevent men running about from place to place if they registered at a bureau.

HENRY MERZ, Cane Farmer, examined:

H. Merz. 10108. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer.
 10109. What is the area of your farm? 130 acres.
 10 May, 1906. 10110. How much is under cane? 110 acres.
 10111. What area did you cut last year? 96 acres.
 10112. Did you cut it by contract or day labour? The mill cut it with black labour.
 10113. Are you registered now? No. I have to plough everything out, and I intend to register as soon as I replant.
 10114. Are you using any white labour? Only for ploughing.
 10115. What do you pay your ploughmen? 25s. a week, and found.
 10116. Have you any difficulty in getting men at that rate? None whatever.
 10117. Have you any experience of employing white men in this district? I never employed any myself.
 10118. How long have you been in the district? Ten years.
 10119. Have you done hard work here? Yes, very hard work.
 10120. Have you ever worked in any other district in Queensland? Yes; I have worked in the Western country.
 10121. At what sort of work? Woolpressing, fencing, and contract work generally.
 10122. Is it much harder to work here than there? I do not find it harder. I see no difference.
 10123. Have you fairly good health here? Yes.
 10124. Are you married or single? Single.
 10125. Do you live near the road? I am close to it.
 10126. Are there many unemployed looking for work at the present time? Not many about the part of the road where I live. There are not many settlers there.
 10127. Is it a main road? Yes; but it does not lead to any big settlement.
 10128. Do you anticipate any difficulty in connection with white labour next crushing season? I do.
 10129. *By Mr. Nielson*: Why? For different reasons. As soon as the crushing commences men will be required everywhere; and when the crushing season comes on it is also the shearing season, while the wheat harvesting is also on, and there will be a demand for labour in every direction, whereas now we have the slackest season. A large number of people are under the impression that they can get work at any season of the year in a sugar-mill. If they cannot get work they think the farmers will not put them on. It ought to be understood that from February up till the commencement of the crushing season there is almost no work to be done. The wet season comes on, and you know what it means to chip or plough in such a wet season as we have. There is very little profitable work during that season. Hambleton wants 200 men and Mulgrave wants 180 men. In the crushing season the planting, chipping, and general work goes on all at once with some of the farmers, and there will be a shortness of labour, in my opinion.
 10130. When do you plant here? We start in June, and continue till September and October.
 10131. Cannot you arrange to plant in the slack season? No. The heavy wet season prevents that, as it makes a heavy mud bed of the field.
 10132. Have you not any means of letting the people know that your crushing season does not start till June? They ought to know that. There have been a lot of statements made about this mill, but it is all misrepresentation. This mill of which I am a director, advertised for men to come here in the crushing season, but the men come flocking here two or three months before the crushing starts.
 10133. But you do not give them any date—You just say the men are wanted? We say that we want them when the crushing season starts.
 10134. But the men in New South Wales or the men out West do not know when your crushing season starts, and it does not mention it in the almanac—As a matter of fact, did you not put that advertisement in so that you would have a lot of men hanging about here as soon as the crushing season starts? Not in the least. We did not try to get men here by the advertisement at all. We advertised so that the men who were here last year would have time to talk the matter over and form themselves into gangs to come up in the crushing season. That cannot all be done in a moment. We have agents in the south attending to that now.
 10135. *By the Chairman*: Where, in Brisbane? No, in the Clarence River district. The agents meet the local labour and let them know.
 10136. *By Mr. Nielson*: Then what was your idea in advertising at all? To let them know that we wanted men when crushing starts. We want to let the men at Chillagoe and Mount Garnet and those places know that we want white labour. By letting them know early, one man talks it over with another, as it takes time before they decide to come.
 10137. Why did not your advertisement mention that they would be wanted in July? We could not mention the exact date, as we might have to put the crushing back for a month. As a matter of fact, we intended to start crushing in June, but the cane is so backward that we shall not be able to start until a month later.
 10138. *By Mr. Paget*: You advertised a month ago? Yes.
 10139. You practically advertised three or four months beforehand? Yes. There is no harm in letting them know that you want labour.
 10140. *By Mr. Nielson*: But do you not think it does a lot of harm to the men who come a long distance and are disappointed? They made a mistake in coming so soon.
 10141. *By the Chairman*: But suppose your advertisement was seen by a man in Sydney or on the Clarence who never saw sugar-cane, but who had plenty of bone and muscle, and thought the work would suit him, how would he know when your crushing started? The crushing starts the same on the Clarence, at Bundaberg, and everywhere else. It always starts in July. The only difference may be that one place will start a fortnight earlier and another place a fortnight later; but it all starts pretty well at the one time.

10142. *By Mr. Nielson*: You know there have been plenty of men coming into this district who have had to go away again? Yes.

10143. Who is doing your woodcutting? A white man has got the contract.

10144. But who is doing the cutting? Some Hindoos are doing the cutting, so far as I remember. Farmers have brought in firewood on different occasions.

10145. Do you not think that the mill might have specified that the contractor should employ white labour only? I do not know.

10146. *By the Chairman*: Would it not be an encouragement for men to come to the district if you did that? It might have kept the men employed about here. All the wood was cut last year by white labour. The men who cut the wood were given the privilege of cutting the cane. Some went on cutting cane, and cut two paddocks. They worked for about six weeks, and were put on to some grub-eaten cane, but they went off, so where did we get the benefit of keeping them on? After all our endeavours to keep them, they left us at the last moment. That grubby cane was afterwards cut by Hindoos, and went 23 tons to the acre.

10147. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think the men who have passed here in the last two months will come back again now that they have found that the mill will not start crushing till July? They certainly will not come back here if they get something to do somewhere else.

10148. *By the Chairman*: What wages did you pay last year? I forget.

10149. Why did these men go away? They just cut two paddocks and went away.

10150. Did they give any reason? They said the cane was not trashed. It has been customary to trash the cane every year, and last year special instructions were given to trash the cane better. We always trash our cane before the crushing starts; but you can see for yourself that if you trash it three, four, or five months before the crushing starts that it will grow again, and look like untrashed cane. That is why the men said it was not trashed cane. I spoke to the ganger and he said, "Do not trash it," and that is the reason that we did not trash it this year.

10151. Are you not trashing any at all this year? It rests with the farmers themselves. We used to trash it, and when the cutting gang came along we would have to trash it again.

10152. *By Mr. Paget*: What price do you pay? 4s. for cutting.

10153. That is for cutting and loading, and shifting the portable tram? Yes.

10154. *By Mr. Nielson*: What did the crop average? Thirty-eight or 39 tons to the acre. The other crop was 22½ tons to the acre, and they could make far more money on the 22½-ton crop than they could on the 38-ton crop. The men were then put into a paddock with grub-eaten cane, which went 23 tons to the acre.

10155. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you any idea what wages they made at those rates? I cannot be positive. They were fairly satisfied.

10156. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think, then, that there will not be sufficient labour? I do not think there will be sufficient labour.

10157. Not in the whole of Australia? I do not think so. My reason for saying that is this: I saw in the Southern papers that a contractor wanted men to cut some sleepers. He applied for men at 25s. a week and found, but he could not get the labour.

10158. You cannot believe what you see in the papers, unless you know all the conditions and the prices that were offering? Well, 25s. a week and found are very good wages for harvesting, and this contractor could not get men for that amount.

10159. Are you getting men from the Clarence River this year? Yes. At the last meeting we distinctly stated that there was no work until the end of June. We told the agent that, and he said he was confident that he would get the labour he wanted.

10160. Did you notice that the Mossman mill got 150 men from the South? I did.

10161. You think because you saw something in the paper about labour being scarce down there that you will not get any? It is quite likely that we will not get it.

10162. Why? There may be an extraordinary supply down there, but we want agricultural labour.

10163. What do you mean by agricultural labour? Labour that is working on the ground and tries to settle on the ground. You must take into consideration that the miner or tradesman will come here if his own trade is bad, and work for a few weeks, but as soon as things brighten up in his own line he will leave us and go back to his own calling. They may be good men, but we cannot depend on them to work for us in this district.

10164. What do you suggest for carrying on the industry? If it is possible, we should have small areas of from 10 to 20 acres on which people could settle down, and that would remove the spirit of restlessness that now prevails.

10165. Do you know any land within 50 miles that is available for such a purpose? The likeliest that I know is at Atherton.

10166. You think the scrub land and the red soil forest land would be suitable for small settlers? Yes.

10167. Is there anything else you would like to speak of? We are more handicapped than farmers in the South.

10168. They did not tell us that at Bundaberg, where they only get 11s. 6d. and 12s. 6d. a ton for their cane? We are handicapped so far as labour is concerned. Good men, especially married men, will stop as far South as possible. Then, as we are only a few miles from a mineral district which has no equal in Australia, where men can get wolfram, alluvial tin and gold, and bismuth, men will be attracted there in preference to coming to the sugar districts. They may not make so much money, but they will be their own bosses, and they can fix their own hours for work.

JOHN MULLINS, Farm Labourer, examined:

10169. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A farm labourer, at present out of employment.

10170. How long have you been out of work? About a week.

10171. What work were you doing last? A bit of grubbing.

10172. Are you camped about here? Yes; I am waiting for the crushing season.

10173. On what subject do you wish to address us? On the unemployed question, and the complaint of the growers that they cannot get enough white men to do their work.

H. Merr.

10 May, 1906.

J. Mullins.

10 May, 1906.

- J. Mullins. 10174. What can you tell us about the unemployed in the district? There are any amount to do the work if the farmers would only give them a fair show. Before to-morrow morning I can bring you from seventy to 100 men who are camped in the district.
10175. Have they been looking for work? Yes.
10176. Can they not get it? At times I got a day or two.
10177. Have they applied to the mill company to be signed on for cane-cutting? Local men had an opportunity of applying to the mill.
10178. Why did you not ask? We asked for work, and were told that there was none.
10179. Did you not ask if you could sign on for the season? No; because I thought it was too early.
10180. There is no fear of a scarcity of labour? No.
10181. Not although several hundreds of kanakas will be going away from here? There are as many hundreds of white workers to take their place. I can prove that from last year. I went to the Mossman three weeks before the season started, and got a job from Mr. Muutz as a ploughman. During the time I was with him, I made it right for a job in a white cane-cutting gang. There were as good men from the South as I ever saw—better men than I am; and they were walking about hungry for several days. I assisted them as well as I could, but they had to go to the police magistrate and get rations to take them over the range.
10182. *By Mr. Paget*: The conditions are altering now; more farmers are registering for white labour? There is no doubt of that.
10183. *By the Chairman*: In spite of that you think there will be plenty of men available? I do, judging by the number of men I saw coming over the range. There is nothing going on in the back country, except two or three little lines, to which they will send the unemployed from Townsville and elsewhere; and all the men are flocking into the sugar districts. The poor unfortunate beggars are walking about for months, and if they could get a week or two's grubbing to get a few clothes and rations they would be satisfied. They are good genuine men.
10184. Is there anything else you wish to say to us? I wish to speak of what has been said about clearing, farming, and woodcutting. There are two men here who have newly started farming. I went to one of them the other day for a job at grubbing. I offered to work for £4 an acre, thinking that if I could make rations until the crushing season came on I should be very well satisfied; but he would not give me the work. He came to the mill and got kanakas, and when the work was finished it had cost him £5 10s. an acre. I went to another man only a few days ago about clearing some land, and I said to him that if he chopped the wood and sent it to the mill he could sell it. I offered to chop it for 4s. a cord, and he said he could not afford it, but he afterwards put on some "boys" to chop it, while I and any amount of genuine and reliable white men are walking about day after day looking for employment. Men like that do not come here looking for drink. They want to make a few pounds during the cane season to tide them over the slack season. I could make up a gang of fifteen men from the Clarence and Richmond, who would start work at once, but we cannot get work.

BERNARD FERDINAND WALK, General Farm Labourer, examined:

- B. F. Walk. 10185. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A general farm hand.
10186. Are you in employment just at present? No.
- 10 May, 1906. 10187. How long have you been out of work? Ever since we finished cutting, about the end of November.
10188. Why are you out of employment? I had to take a spell at first as it was too dry to get work, and afterwards because it was too wet.
10189. Have you looked for any work lately? Lately I have not bothered.
10190. Are you a single man? Yes.
10191. On what subject do you want to address us? Work in general.
10192. Have you worked here regularly every season? I have been here cane-cutting for three seasons.
10193. How do you find the work compares with labouring work in other parts of Australia? Equally as good as at Bundaberg.
10194. Do you not find it more distressing than at Bundaberg? No.
10195. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you get better prices for cane-cutting than at Bundaberg? I always worked on wages there—25s. a week; here we get nothing but contract work.
10196. Do none of the farmers here employ men on wages at cane-cutting? Mrs. Möller at Aloomba paid 6s. a day and found.
10197. *By the Chairman*: Can you do as well on contract here as on wages at Bundaberg? We have done better at the prices we have been getting. The first year we only made 25s. a week—that was at 5s. 6d. a ton. Since then we have done better. We got 6s. 6d. per ton at Aloomba.
10198. Have you any special mates, or are you simply speaking of yourself and the men you worked with? I represent the Sugar Workers' Union, partly.
10199. You do not find anything in the climate to object to? No. I thought it was much better than the South during the summer months.
10200. There is nothing in the climate to frighten men away? No.
10201. Is there much unemployed labour about here just now? I could not say. I have seen men coming and going.
10202. Are there a large number of men who are so unfortunate as to have no work? There are a few.
10203. Do you think there is any fear of a scarcity of labour next crushing season? I believe there will be on account of so many growers registering in the one year.
10204. Can you suggest any means by which labour can be induced to come here? Not now. I think if the Sugar Bounty Act had been followed up from 1903, and the white labour had been gradually increased, there would not have been a scarcity of labour now.
10205. Do you think there should be immigration from Europe to supply the places of these kanakas when they go away? I do not favour that at all until we see that there is a scarcity.
10206. It will be late in the day to do anything when the scarcity is distinctly apparent? I do not favour immigration till then.
10207. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think there will be a scarcity of labour in Queensland? There will be a scarcity in the Cairns district.

10208. Do you not think men will come here from the South the same as they have done all along? Sometimes I think we shall have too many here and at other times I do not.
10209. You have no fixed opinion on the subject? No.
10210. *By Mr. Paget:* What about a system of discharges or reference, in connection with the Sugar Workers' Union. Would you favour that? I think it would be a good idea.
10211. It would be a good thing for both employer and employee? Yes.
10212. *By the Chairman:* Do you think good men would object to ask for a reference—would they feel that they were doing anything that would benefit them when they were asking a man for a reference when they went away? Some men would be practical farm hands, and others, perhaps, might never have been on a farm. There would be that distinction.
10213. *By Mr. Paget:* But, speaking as to general sobriety and ability and willingness to do the work, would it not be a good thing? It might be.
10214. Sailors get discharges from their ships? That is to show they are sailors.
10215. And shearers and men engaged in the pastoral industry get discharges to show that they have been in the sheds? I believe it is a good idea. I would like to say something about the woodcutting. Last year the work was given to the white man, but this year it seems the white man is not to have the woodcutting to do.
10216. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you made inquiries to try to find out why that appears to be so? I spoke to one of the farmers, but I could not get any satisfaction. I asked him if my tender was accepted. He said, "Did not the secretary of the mill tell you yes e-day?" I said "Yes; but I want to know who the contractor is, as I want to get some work from him." He then said, "I am a bit behind to-day, and I have not yet read the paper." That was all he would say to me.
10217. He would not tell you who got the contract? No. I afterwards met the man who had the contract. He sent for me, and I had a look at the work at Harvey's Creek. I asked him the price, and when he told me I could not see my way to accept it. I could not agree to carry out the work at the price he named, as it was too low. I told him I could not do it, and he said, "If I cannot get white men to do it I will have to put on Hindoos." I told him that I knew where there were some men who would be anxious to do the work for the price he offered, but the next thing I heard was that he had given the work to the Hindoos. At the commencement of the season I put in a tender of 4s. 6d. for the wood, but I did not get it. I thought I would do some firing or something of that kind, but when I went up to the mill and gave my name they told me that they would not employ me.
10218. Why was that? I do not know.
10219. Is it much hotter here than in other places? I felt it warmer in the Isis than here. I thought it was rather cooler here than in other places.

SMITH WILLIAM DAVIDS, Manager of the Mulgrave Central Mill, examined:

10220. *By the Chairman:* How long have you been up in this district? Eight and a-half years.
10221. Where did you live before you came here? I came from the old country, but have lived most of my time in Northern Queensland.
10222. Did you not live in the South at all? Only for a few weeks in Brisbane.
10223. Can you compare the climate of Brisbane with this climate? The Brisbane climate is much more healthy, and less trying than this climate.
10224. You employ both white and black labour? Yes; I employ both black and white gangs.
10225. You have a standing advertisement in the paper asking for labour? It is not in now. It was taken out.
10226. It ought to be taken out if it is not? We have arranged for all of our labour.
10227. Have you got local labour, or did you get it from the South? We got two-thirds of it from the South.
10228. What part of the South? From the Richmond and the Tweed.
10229. Are these men signing on in gangs? Yes; they are making a point of signing on in gangs.
10230. We have had men here complaining that, in consequence of your advertisement, they have been applying for work, and that they expected to get it? No one has applied for work. Numbers of letters have been written by different men telling us that they can get gangs and asking for particulars, and we have sent particulars.
10231. Are there any of those men here to-day? No. Three or four men have applied for work as cane-cutters, and I have reserved one-third of the gangs for local labour, if I can get it.
10232. Have you still openings for men? Yes. I practically engaged one man this morning.
10233. We had one man here who said that he could make up a gang of fifteen? There are plenty of men who could make up gangs, but they are not altogether desirable. I want experienced men.
10234. You want men who have cut cane before? If possible.
10235. Do you not think it is a fair thing to allow a certain proportion of learners in every gang? We cannot afford to make experiments.
10236. Do you not know that they allow a certain proportion of learners in a shearing-shed? If shearing is stopped for a day, it does no great harm; but it is a serious matter for a sugar-mill to be stopped for a day.
10237. But you cannot get experienced men unless you teach them first? I reckon the loss in the mill is £5 for every hour it is stopped, so that we cannot afford to experiment with labour; but what does it cost if a shearing-shed is stopped for an hour?
10238. It costs a lot of money, as you have your flocks all over the run? There is no actual loss.
10239. *By Mr. Nielson:* You depend upon other districts to train your labour for you? For this year it is an experiment. Next year we may be able to get local men.
10240. *By the Chairman:* How can you expect to get local men if you do not allow them to learn? We tried local men last year.
10241. How can you hope to get local men if you give them no chance of learning? They might be able to join some of these other gangs.
10242. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you mean that you desire experienced men to take the contracts? We are getting two-thirds experienced men from the South. We prefer experienced men right through if we can get them. The other third I am going to make up from the best men I can get here, but I do not think we will get them.

B. F. Walk.
10 May, 1906.

S. W. Davids.
10 May, 1906.

S. W. Davis. 10213. They will be the learners, and by and by they will become experienced? Yes.

10214. *By the Chairman:* Do you expect any difficulty in getting ordinary field hands? We have always worked the mill with white labour. We have a difficulty every year. The number of hands we employ in the mill is ninety-seven, and last year we put through our books over 300 to keep up to that strength.

10245. What was the main cause of the men not staying? Generally it was intemperance. Out of the ninety-seven there are twenty-three who have been here for terms varying from two to ten years. They are fixtures. I had exactly the same experience in Bundaberg; in fact, we went through more men there.

10246. *By Mr. Paget:* Excluding the twenty-three permanent hands, practically four men went through the mill for every man you required? I think it comes to more than that.

10246A. Have you tried hitherto to do much cutting and loading with white labour? There was a gang of white men working for one of the farmers for three years—he was the only farmer who was registered for white labour.

10247. Did you, as manager of the mill, have anything to do with it? We had one gang last year.

10248. What happened? We advertised in the local papers for eight weeks for gangs to supply us with 60 tons of cane per day, and we got two applications. Each applicant undertook to supply us with 30 tons per day. One withdrew his application after two or three days, and a third man put in an application. We accepted the two applications on their own terms—*i.e.* a ton for cutting and loading, and shifting the tramline in the fields. We did it purely as an experiment to cut cane that was registered. We were getting it cut by Indians for 2s. 6d.

10249. *By the Chairman:* How did they work? They worked for three weeks, and then they threw it up. Before they started at all they demanded another 1s. a ton because the cane was not growing straight up and down.

10250. *By Mr. Paget:* What was the tonnage? The first field averaged 39.9 tons per acre. They averaged $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons a day per man in that crop. The second field was 30 tons to the acre. They did rather better in that, averaging 2 tons or $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons per day. Then we put them into a third field, which was dirty. Nearly one-third of our crop last year was badly grub-eaten, and we put every gang, with the exception of this white gang, into grub-eaten cane. The white gang worked in this field for three hours, and then they reckoned they could not make bread and butter at it, and threw it up.

10251. What did it average? 23 tons to the acre. The Indians averaged $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons in it.

10252. *By the Chairman:* You are not sanguine about white labour? No.

10253. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you know whether the members of that gang were local residents? I do not know, but I think the experienced men came from the South.

10254. *By the Chairman:* Do you not think that once the system becomes established it will be easy to get gangs from the South, just as they get gangs of shearers? That is our only hope.

10255. Do you not think it is a reasonable hope? If these fellows can stand the climate this season and can make it pay, they will come again.

10256. We have had witnesses to-day who tell us that the climate is no worse than the climate anywhere else? Have they done any cane-cutting?

10257. Yes? I would like to know who they were.

10258. The last witness looked a likely man; he is a decent-looking fellow who has done navvying—I should be no worse for men coming from the Richmond and Clarence Rivers than for shearers coming from New Zealand, so far as distance is concerned? No.

10259. *By Mr. Paget:* We have had witnesses who have told us that the climate is actually cooler than it is down South? I know that my family and I have to go South every year or we would not stand it long. At the end of the season I am done; I do not know about the cane-cutters.

10260. How many farmers are supplying cane to the mill? About forty.

10261. How many coloured growers are there? We have one Chinaman on leased land.

10262. *By the Chairman:* Have you many kanakas employed? Just now we have about forty.

10263. Are they indentured men? No; they are all re-engagement "boys".

10264. Do their agreements all expire at the same time? They all expire at the end of the year.

10265. *By Mr. Paget:* Have the farmers planted their usual areas this year? I think so. Nearly the whole of the cane to be cut by European labour is plant cane.

10266. You do not think they are going to reduce the areas they have under cane? I do not think so.

10267. Upon what class of labour do you think they are relying to harvest their cane and carry on their cultivation? I do not think any of our farmers are very hopeful of the results of white labour.

10268. But a number of them have registered? Because there is no help for it.

10269. Are they depending upon coloured labour in the future? They do not know what is going to happen in the future. I do not think the farmers are looking ahead more than two years at the very outside.

10270. Do you know whether the Farmers' Association have tried to make arrangements for obtaining suitable labour for the coming season after the kanakas may not work? No; I think they are depending entirely upon the mill company.

10271. Is it the intention of the company to make arrangements to have men at hand for carrying on the cultivation after the next crushing season? Undoubtedly—white labour. After this crushing season there will be no black labour except casual Indians, and they are very scarce.

10272. Then it is the intention of the company to try to assist the new system in every way? Yes.

10273. You are prepared to give it a perfectly fair trial? Yes; and go to expense over it. We have not the slightest wish to close down the mill for want of labour.

10274. That is, if suitable labour can be procured and you can afford to pay the wages that should be paid to the men? Yes.

10275. What wages do you propose to pay the men for fieldwork, or work other than contract work? Twenty-five shillings a week and tucker. That is the wage I heard the farmers talk about.

10276. *By the Chairman:* You think that would be a fair thing? Yes, quite.

10277. *By Mr. Paget:* You think the price given by the mill for cane, together with the bonus, is sufficient to enable them to pay such wages? We shall not be able to continue paying the price for cane that we have been paying. We shall not get the same profits from growing or milling when wages are at the standard that is going on.

10278. Next year the mill will pay £4 excise instead of £3, which is being paid this year? Yes.

10279. Will you pay the same price for cane next year as you do this year? We hope so. We have not *S. W. Davis.*
given it much thought yet.
10280. Assuming the price of sugar is the same? That is problematical. So long as the price of sugar remains the same, and the bonus for registered cane is the same, and the men are prepared to cut the cane for the wage we offer, then we shall be able to rub along *10 May, 1906.*
10281. If you can get a sufficiency of suitable labour? Yes. If the present conditions continue we ought to be able to rub along. But we shall not pay the same price for cane.
10282. *By the Chairman:* Will the farmers be able to rub along, then, at the reduced price? Yes; they are all right.
10283. *By Mr. Paget:* What price did the company pay for cane last season? 20s. per ton for the cane on the lowlands, and 21s. for the cane on the highlands. The average would be 20s. 9d.
10284. And the registered cane-grower also gets 5s. per ton as bonus? Yes.
10285. You are paying a higher price for cane at this mill than any other mill in the North? Yes.
10286. Owing to what reason? The crops are with us always.
10287. And good management? I will not say that. We have a very good board of directors, and they pull well together. The cane is always here, and we have no frost.
10288. And the sugar contents of the cane are high? No, it is full of impurities. It does not compare with the purity of the Mackay crop.
10289. *By Mr. Nielson:* What would be the average tonnage per acre throughout your suppliers? Last year the average was 17 tons.
10290. How many tons of cane does it take to make a ton of sugar? Eight tons.
10291. Do you consider you are in a worse position in this district than in any other district in Queensland in regard to labour? We are no worse off than Mossman.
10292. Are you worse off than Proserpine with respect to the supply of labour? Proserpine is nearer the centres of labour than we are. There is not sufficient labour coming into Cairns to supply us with 300 men when we are wanting them.
10293. Do you think the working conditions and the attractions for labour are worse than in any other district? I think they are.
10294. Are you worse off than Mossman? We are about the same.
10295. Can you explain why it is that there is less white-grown cane in this district than in any other district in Queensland? Have the Mossman people done well with their white labour?
10296. They say so—Has there been any encouragement on the part of your mill directors in the direction of changing from black-grown cane to white-grown? Yes. We had a general meeting of farmers in 1901, and it was the opinion of the farmers that it would be safer to continue in the direction we were going than to experiment with white labour.
10297. Do you not think it would have been safer to have experimented three or four years ago than to leave it to be done suddenly now? I do not think so. No one cared to throw up a certainty for an uncertainty.
10298. *By Mr. Paget:* No farmer chose to sacrifice himself for the benefit of his fellow farmers? That is it.
10299. *By Mr. Nielson:* Although the results shown by other districts were available they were not acted upon by this district? I do not think we have seen any favourable results from white labour anywhere—at least, I have not.
10300. You have not seen any failures of any of the mills, and they have been more financial since the introduction of the bonus? I do not know of any mill that is financial yet.
10301. I know of one that cleared over £40,000 the season before last, though I do not know what they did last year? With white labour?
10302. No? Well, we have worked with the bulk of our labour black, and flatter ourselves we have beaten them all.
10303. I am satisfied that so far as the amount of cane is concerned you have beaten them all; but having in view the changes that took place, the directors of this mill did not do their duty to the farmers in not giving the federal legislation some consideration before? That is a matter of opinion.
10304. How do you get your firewood cut? By contract.
10305. What labour cuts it? White men or Japanese. There was a complaint lodged against me by Mr. Grant that the company were employing kanakas to cut wood. Mr. Grant asked me to stop it immediately, but as a matter of fact we were not employing kanakas at all.
10306. Your directors may be doing it for all you know? I do not think so.
10307. We had evidence that you let contracts for the supply of firewood, and the contractor employs what labour he likes? That is right.
10308. Do you not think that if you wanted to keep white men about here it would be in the interests of the mill to substitute the employment of white labour in the slack season work? It might keep the white men about here, but it would not keep the mill going, and, as manager of the mill, I want to keep it going.
10309. But in the off season? You cannot depend on them cutting the wood. I sent some men up the line, and while some worked for a couple of days some never started at all. I paid their fares, too, and I found it was no use trying to get them to cut firewood.
10310. Do they not cut it? No. The man who comes round looking for work is not the man he pretends to be. That is my experience. It is the experience of men who are contracting for firewood, too.
10311. You have made all the arrangements for the labour required for the coming season? Practically.
10312. After this season is over you will want a larger number than in the coming season? Yes, to supply the place of forty kanakas.
10313. And to supply the place of Japanese and Hindoos? Yes.
10314. Do you think there is sufficient white labour in Australia for the sugar industry? It is very easy to work that out. We employ 400 men altogether.
10315. *By Mr. Paget:* There are 5,000 kanakas now in the industry who will not be employed after this year? Yes. Well, there are thirty-two mills in the State, and we employ 400 men, the Mossman employs 500, and Hambleton employs 500.

S. W. Davids. 10316. And Bingera has also a large number? Yes. You will not be far out if you take thirty mills with an average of 400 men each. That is, the number of men who will be required to run the sugar industry throughout the State is 12,000.

10 May, 1906. 10317. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think that number is available in Australia? I should not think there were 12,000 idle men who would be available for working in the cane-fields and in the mills.

10318. You have got to recollect that there are a good many engaged in the industry already? We employ thirty during the slack season.

10319. You do not think the number will be available in Australia? No.

10320. *By the Chairman*: None of those 12,000 are kanakas—You are talking of all the men engaged in the whole industry? Yes.

10321. *By Mr. Nielson*: Where would you suggest men should be obtained from? My opinion is that the average white man is not suitable for this climate, and so I would say, get coloured labour of some sort. I do not care where it comes from.

10322. *By the Chairman*: Would you favour the introduction of Italians? They would be better than men from the north of Europe.

10323. Have you had any experience of Italians? I have had two or three working at odd times.

10324. Were they good men? Yes. They have always worked in the mill—never outside.

10325. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you given the question of the deportation of the kanakas any thought? No. I do not quite know how it can be done.

10326. Is there any further evidence you would like to give? I do not know whether I ought to give you our experience with white labour in the mill for three or four years. It is the same old thing. We got a special gang of men from Bundaberg to load the carrier, and we paid their fares. They worked for nine days and then threw up the job, and we worked for the rest of the season with Hindoos. The two previous years we had white gangs, and they threw up the work after nine and eleven days.

10327. The came-unloader you have invented overcomes that difficulty? We got it the next year, and there has been no trouble since.

JOHN GREER, General Labourer, examined:

J. Greer. 10328. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A general labourer.

10 May, 1906. 10329. Are you a resident in the district? I came here six weeks ago, in consequence of the representations of the Press.

10330. Are you unemployed at present? Yes.

10331. What were the Press representations that you speak of? I was working at Herberton, getting a bit of tin, and was making my tucker and a few shillings a day; and my experience is that, if a mill advises that it will start on a certain date, there is so much work to be done before it starts. As a rule, the cane has to be stripped. One of the things that was represented to the Federal members was that the cane had to be stripped before the crushing, and that it cost so much. That was the cry when the farmers wanted the bonus for white labour. Yet there is not one farmer around here who has ever put on a man to strip his cane.

10332. You came here expecting to get work at trashing or other field work before the crushing season commenced? Yes.

10333. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you gone through the district looking for work? I have been at two or three places. I heard of a job down the road the other day. The farmer was going to plant a little, but he had two men already engaged. I heard of another man who was going to shell a little bit of corn, but he had two men engaged. I spoke to the butcher here, and to Mrs. Möller, but she is full-handed at present. I have also spoken to different ones round the district.

10334. You think there is no chance of a man getting a job? No. According to what the manager tells me, if they do not start stripping, there is nothing but to leave the district.

10335. *By Mr. Paget*: Has the manager led you to believe that he has all the mill hands engaged? No. He says he has all the hand—he requires at present.

10336. But for the crushing season? He tells you that, if you are here when the crushing season starts, you may have a chance; but a man will try his chance at mills where they start sooner than this one.

10337. Can you give us any information with regard to the supply of labour? There is no necessity to ask any questions about labour. There are hundreds of labourers in every place you travel to, from Chillagoe to the Tate. I worked on the Tate a little this year, and 300 men passed through unable to get work. That is one of the most outlandish places in Queensland, and yet there is no shortage of labour there.

10338. What work is there there? Tin sluicing. After a man has put in a crushing season here, it is no use stopping during the slack season, and we generally got over the range. I generally follow a bit of tin or gold, and I can always make a living. According to the Press reports, I thought the crushing was going to start about the beginning of June, and I came down believing that there would be plenty of work. There was no one going over the range; they were all making for the sugar districts. I could have made a little less than an ounce to the dish over the range, but I have been here for three weeks, and have been unable to get any work. It is only a matter of staying and spending my last shilling. Why should not the Press be censured for misrepresentations, in talking about a scarcity of labour? I believe the Mossman mill is shipping men from Victoria, although there are hundreds of men on the Mossman to-day looking for work. They are making for the Mossman, because they have the reputation of giving good money, and yet the mill is going elsewhere for men.

10339. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think there will be plenty of men at the Mossman and in this district when the crushing starts? I would not be surprised if the Mossman does not have a man half the way through the season. If they treated me the same as they treat men at the present time, I would never go again, and I would advise my friends not to go either. I would let them engage men from the South all through. There must be plenty of men, because they are drifting up and down the roads in hundreds every day between Geraldton and the Mossman. If you went round this district I would guarantee you could pick up 300 idle men.

10340. *By Mr. Paget*: One witness said seventy or eighty? I could take you to the camps of that number within half a mile of here. Men only stop for a day. They are destitute and have to keep going.

10341. Have you been following up the occupation of cane-cutting or of mill work? It is twelve years since I started cutting cane in New South Wales, and I have cut it for eight years in Queensland.

J. Greer.

10 May, 1906.

10342. So that you look to that class of work for five or six months in the year? I do as a rule. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company have been manufacturing sugar for a very long time, and they have always cultivated and trashed their cane, and allowed it to mature before crushing, and what they do should be an object lesson to the farmers.

10343. You think the farmers here might take a lesson from the company? Yes; in the matter of cultivation. The farmers are only working to make money. They will cut late this year, and that means a late crop next year. They do not strip their cane, and it will not be matured, so that they cannot get the same density as from cane that is stripped. When the Federal members were here, these men represented to them that so much was paid for trashing and chipping and ploughing and cultivation. It was misrepresentation, as there is no stripping done to-day. If we cut cabbage cane we have to lose by it.

10344. Your argument is that if the cane was stripped beforehand instead of being stripped when it is cut, there would be more cane to be cut per acre? Yes; more mature cane. The inspector allows too much cabbage to pass on the cane which he receives at the mill, though if I sent in any with the cabbage on it I would have to lose by it.

10345. You are now speaking of the Excise officer? Yes. He allows the directors to pass their cane with too much cabbage on it.

10346. By Mr. Nielson: And you say that such cane as that should not get the bonus? No. These farmers should be treated in the same way as the workers on the land. If I take up 5 acres of land, and grow cane on it, I have to cut it clean. I understand what cane-cutting is. Yet here is a director of the mill who is allowed to cut it right to the cabbage. He gets full weight for it, and that means a lot in a few thousand tons. The manager of the mill is afraid to say anything about it, because they are directors of the mill; and it remains with the Excise officer to condemn that cane when it is going over the weighbridge.

10347. By Mr. Paget: At the end of this year some 5,000 or 6,000 men who are now engaged in the industry will not be employed under the Federal Act? Yes; that is so.

10348. Do you think there will be sufficient unemployed to fill their places? Without a doubt there will.

10349. In the State? Yes.

10350. The question of workers' homesteads has cropped up, and the idea is to give men like yourself, who have been going to different occupations all over the place, an opportunity to settle down on lands and work in the crushing season in the canefields.—Do you think such a scheme as that would work out to the benefit of the workers? Yes; to the benefit of the workers and the country too.

10351. What area of reasonably good land do you think a man should be able to settle down on? It depends on what a man's needs are. If he is settling down on the land for life it would be a different question. The area of land should be increased within a certain time.

10352. At the present moment you would not give an opinion as to a hard-and-fast rule, but you say that a certain area should be fixed, and within a given number of years he should be allowed to increase his area? Yes.

10353. Naturally, some of the men would go away? Yes.

WILLIAM CHARLES GRIFIN, Cane Farmer and Secretary to the Cairns Farmers' Association, examined: W. C. Griffin.

10354. By the Chairman: What are you? A cane farmer. I am secretary to the Cairns District United Farmers' Association.

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10355. What is the area of your farm? I have two farms of 75 acres each. I cultivate 120 acres out of the 150.

10356. Did you cut any cane last year? I cut 2,000 tons from 90 acres.

10357. With white or coloured labour? With coloured labour.

10358. By Mr. Paget: Was it cut by the mill gang? Yes.

10359. By the Chairman: Are you registered this year? I have one farm of 75 acres registered. The whole of it was harvested by coloured labour last year. I intend registering the other farm as opportunity offers.

10360. Is this your first experience of white labour? Yes.

10361. How have you succeeded in supplying yourself with white labour? I have got on splendidly with white labour.

10362. Are they local men? Yes; and I am particular to choose the best men.

10363. By Mr. Paget: What arrangements have you made for harvesting your crop this year? I am connected with the Mulgrave Central Mill, and they have taken it upon themselves, the farmers acquiescing, to procure the labour for the harvesting of the collective crops.

10364. The mill is engaging white gangs for harvesting the registered cane? Yes. I was agreeable, with the others, that it should be done.

10365. By the Chairman: What wages are you paying white men just now for ordinary field work? I have a habit of getting my work done by contract, if possible. If not, I pay 7s. a day, and let them find themselves. My ploughmen I pay 25s. a week and found.

10366. Are you paying 7s. a day for ordinary cultivation work? Yes.

10367. What do you consider it costs a man to find himself here? I allow 12s. a week to feed them fairly well. Some say 15s. is a fair thing. I never weigh out the rations, so that I cannot say with certainty what it costs.

10368. By Mr. Paget: Does the 12s. a week cover the cost of cooking? Yes.

10369. By Mr. Nielson: What does the Commissioner for Income Tax allow for the keep of a man? I claim a deduction of 12s. a week for a man I keep, and he has made no comment.

10370. By the Chairman: Do you anticipate any trouble in getting whatever labour you want in the coming season? No. The mill company have taken it upon themselves to find the labour, and they are more sanguine about it than I am. Mr. Munro, one of our directors, has been down South lately, and he assured a meeting of the farmers connected with the mill that it was quite feasible that we would get sufficient labour accustomed to the work to take off the crops. There is a possibility of getting fifty or

W. C. Griffin. sixty good local men who have done a little at the work, and they are not included at all. They have not made arrangements yet to take off any of the cane; but they are to be employed if they and the mill authorities can come to terms.

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10371. *By Mr. Paget:* We understand, from evidence given to-day, that one-third of the harvesting has been left for local men? Yes; and I think there is labour here to cope with that amount.

10372. Will the coloured gang take off the cane that you have not registered? Yes, this year. It is very peculiarly situated. I have nearly everything to plough out this year and next year, and, being old cane and some of it rubbishy, I did not register it last year, but I shall have it registered for next year's crop.

10373. *By the Chairman:* Have you had any experience of the floating labour at present in the district? I do not think so highly of them as of men I know.

10374. You have not tried them? No. It is an easy matter for me to get the men I want at any time.

10375. Where do the fifty or sixty men work when they are not employed in the sugar industry? Some of them work at timber-getting, and others float about.

10376. Where do they live? About here.

10377. Are they single men? The majority of them are.

10378. Do you think it would be better if land could be obtained for the purpose of settling men on the land so that their labour might always be available? Yes; but you would want to give a man sufficient land to make a living on.

10379. No; he is to make his living out of what he earns from you? That is a game I do not believe in. I think the sugar estates should be cut up into smaller blocks, giving a man an interest in a piece of land, out of which he could make a living with the assistance of one or two men.

10380. Would you not only intensify the trouble by making those men employers of labour as well as yourself? If they were employers of labour it would lessen the trouble, because there would be more employers and fewer workmen. If a man has a very large area, he concentrates everything, and does things as economically as possible, and he may have a lesser number of men than several farmers would employ at this time of the year, when there is next to nothing to do. If a farmer had anything less than 100 acres he would be engaged at some work or other on his land, and I think he would cultivate it better than a man with a larger area. If he was a working man he could not get work, but if he was a proprietor he would get something that would be of benefit to himself—that is, the land out of which he would be able to make a living.

10381. Are there any Crown lands about here? I do not know of any Crown lands in the immediate vicinity.

10382. Do you know the Atherton Scrub? I have been there.

10383. Is there a practicable track to there? Yes. You can take a packhorse heavily laden. A horse can carry 2 cwt. up and down, although it is a nasty range to negotiate. It is a couple or three hours' struggle, but it is all right afterwards. There is a lot of idle land there.

10384. Do you think if men were settled over there they would work here in the cane-fields and go home occasionally? Yes. A man could easily do that. He could make a living on his land in the slack season, and he could work in the sugar districts in the crushing time.

10385. Do you approve of such a scheme as that? Yes, I do.

10386. Would it be a feasible scheme? Yes.

10387. Having regard to the situation of the Atherton Scrub and the means of transit? Yes. It would be advantageous all right. A man living on the high lands in the worst part of the year would have a healthier existence, and the change would do him good. While this climate is not what we would call an unhealthy one, the climate up there is a better one still, and it is a more pleasant one to live in.

10388. *By Mr. Paget:* What about the supply of labour after this year, as it is a comparatively easy matter this year? It will be easier afterwards. We think that this is the most trying year. This occupation has always been treated as one that is not fit for a white man to take in hand, but the employment of white labour improves the character of the work, and it is only practical experience with the work that will cause white men to take it up. Some of the men who have been doing navvying and other similar labour, and have come to do cane-cutting afterwards, find that there is nothing wrong with it at all. So long as they can make 8s, 9s, or 10s. a day at it, they would rather do cane-cutting than any other class of work.

10389. But after this year a greatly increased number of white men will be required than are here now, owing to the effects of federal legislation in connection with the Polynesians? Yes.

10390. Do you think there will be sufficient labour to take the place of the 5,000 or 6,000 Polynesians who have to leave the industry at the end of this year? I think if we can get over this year it will be a comparatively easy matter to battle through afterwards. If the men go in for something new and make decent money out of it, they will give that class of labour such a good name that it will induce other men to take it in hand. Up till the present year the industry has been "run down" so much by different people that men kept clear of it; but once it gets lauded up you will find that men will come here.

10391. Like a new gold rush? Yes, something like that. If a thing is said to be useless they leave it alone.

10392. Do you think the industry should continue to receive protection to enable you to pay the rate of wages you mentioned just now? Some protection is absolutely necessary.

10393. That is either by a direct bonus, as you have now, or protection in some shape or form? Yes; but protection without classification would put the white and the coloured labour on the same footing.

10394. I do not wish to enter into that phase of it at all; I was speaking with reference to the cane grown by white labour? Yes; some kind of protection is certainly required, and the present system is a very good one.

10395. But that system is supposed to exist only until 1913? Yes.

10396. You think, then, that with the continuance of the wages you have specified you have no fear about being able to get sufficient white labour to conduct the industry? I have no fear whatever.

10397. It has not been necessary for your association to take any steps in connection with this labour owing to the attitude adopted by the mill? That is so. There is an association at Hambledon and one at Aloomba, and we leave it entirely in their hands to use the methods that seem best to them, but we have taken absolutely no steps to secure labour for the coming harvest.

10398. And I suppose if the experiment is a success this year that the mill will continue to carry on the W. C. Griffin work on the same lines? Yes. It has been looked at in this light: that the men will be there getting their money with less trouble by being under the mill authorities' control than they would be if under the control of the individual farmers. Then, again, the work has to be done to the satisfaction of the mill authorities, consequently it is better for the workmen to be under their control also.

10399. Are the farmers satisfied with such a system? Yes. The farmers connected with the mill had a meeting and agreed to adopt that system. It may be only a temporary thing, but we are going to put it through that way this season.

10400. It is practically the system adopted by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company on the Northern Rivers of New South Wales? Yes.

10401. Have you taken the matter of the deportation of the islanders into consideration at all from a practical point of view? No. I read what Mr. Wilson said in Cairns, and I think his idea is a really good one. I am of opinion that there is going to be trouble with these "boys" directly. It is all right when they have money and are independent. They are cheeky enough then, but when they get hard up they will become more cheeky. When they begin to feel the pinch they will get worse. I think every facility should be put at their disposal to enable them to get home.

10402. You understand that until the end of this year they are practically free agents whether they go home or stay? Yes. The officials connected with this mill say that the "boys" are getting very cheeky, and say they want to go home. As a matter of fact, some of them agreed to the cancellation of their agreements with the mill, and got paid off. They said they wanted to go home, but when it came to the pinch only half of them would go, and the rest wanted to walk about.

10402a. The shipping difficulty arises then—that is, the difficulty in connection with the boats coming here to take them away—As to the matter of deporting a large number of them at the end of this year, that is a matter you have not given any consideration to? The only thing I can suggest is to place boats at their disposal. They can easily get a living at their islands when they get there.

10403. There will be boats placed at their disposal? You could not deport them without boats. The "boys" that are here have to feed, and they are spending their money before they can get a boat. It is hard on the taxpayer that he should have to stand the cost of the "boy's" passage after he has squandered his money. I think the Licensing Act should be strictly enforced, especially with regard to Sunday trading.

10404. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you not think that when the licenses were applied for the people should have taken action themselves? These public-houses were built a few years back, and people were quite indifferent on the question, but they look at it in a different light now.

(Hambleton.)

FRIDAY, 11 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

JAMES CAMPBELL, Cane Farmer, examined:

10405. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer, residing at Hambleton.

10406. What is the area of your farm? About 135 acres.

10407. How much is under cane? Only about 40 acres at present. There is a good deal of fallow.

10408. How much did you cut last year? 575 tons from about 50 acres.

10409. Did you cut it with the mill gang? With kanakas from the mill.

10410. Are you registered for this year? I have part of my land registered.

10411. How much have you registered? About 40 acres.

10412. Have you had any difficulty in getting white labour for that area? I have not used any white labour on it yet. It was worked with kanakas till 20th January last, and then it was registered.

10413. Have you ever employed white labour? Yes.

10414. Have you been able to get satisfactory men? I registered three years ago, and worked with white labour for twelve months, but I had to cut the cane with black labour.

10415. Had you any difficulty in getting the white men you wanted? No.

10416. Were a fair proportion of them good men? They were fairly good workers, but they were humbugged through the mill.

10417. How do you mean "through the mill"? They trashed the cane, and the mill condemned the trashing.

10418. *By Mr. Nielson:* What was your opinion of the trashing? It was not a first-rate job. I admit it was pretty hard trashing, for it was lying down. It was old ratoon.

10419. Considering the state of the cane, did they do a fair thing? Not altogether; they might have done it a little better.

10420. Were they experienced men? No; with the exception of one or two.

10421. *By the Chairman:* Then the labour was not altogether satisfactory? No.

10422. Were the men fairly decent and temperate? Yes, while they were with me. They worked well, too. They went in to make a good day's wages, and they rather slumped it.

10423. Do you expect any difficulty in getting labour in the future? No; always provided I can pay them a fair day's wages.

10424. What do you consider a fair day's wages from the employer's standpoint? I should say about 7s. a day and find themselves, or 25s. to 30s. a week and found—say, 30s. in the cutting season.

10425. I presume you will be able to pay those wages? Not at Hambleton.

10426. Why? It is impossible owing to the price of cane.

10427. *By Mr. Nielson:* Are you under agreement to supply cane for any term to the mill? Yes.

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- J. Campbell. 10428. How long has the agreement to run? Up to the end of 1907.
10429. Was the price agreed upon when you signed the original agreement? It was fixed years ago, but it was altered after federation.
- 11 May, 1906. 10430. *By the Chairman:* When did you enter into the agreement? In 1897.
10431. What did you get in those days? 11s. a ton.
10432. When the Commonwealth Parliament passed certain legislation there was an alteration? Yes; the price was altered to 16s. a ton for 14 per cent. sugar content.
10433. Was the 11s. irrespective of analysis? Yes.
10434. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you any system of checking the analysis? No. We have to take what the mill gives us. It dropped from 16s. the year before last to 13s. 3d. last year.
10435. *By the Chairman:* Was any explanation given as to why the price dropped? The cane was supposed to be of inferior quality.
10436. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many white farmers are under the same agreement as you? There are very few left now at Hambledon.
10437. *By the Chairman:* Is not the bulk of the cane going into the Hambledon mill grown by Chinese? Nearly two-thirds of it.
10438. *By Mr. Nielson:* To what do you attribute that result? Owing to the price of cane white men are not able to grow it. White growers are gradually going out and Chinese are coming in.
10439. Is there any appreciable difference between the prices paid here and by the Mulgrave Central Mill? Yes. The Farmers' Association at Hambledon, to which I belong, have information in their possession to the effect that, if the Mulgrave farmers had been paid on the same basis as we were, they would have received 11s. 3d. a ton instead of the 20s. or 21s. which they received.
10440. According to that, your cane is about the same as that at the Mulgrave? No; it was really 2s. a ton better here last year. We were paid 13s. 3d. a ton, and, if the Mulgrave people had been paid on the same basis, they would only have got 11s. 3d.
10441. Then I suppose you hold that you are not being paid on a fair basis? No; decidedly not.
10442. And you think you have no remedy until your agreement expires? None whatever.
10443. *By the Chairman:* Your remedy, then, will be to remove elsewhere? Yes; and make room for the Chinaman. That is the only remedy.
10444. *By Mr. Nielson:* The land you have is under lease from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? Yes; it is on a purchasing lease.
10445. *By the Chairman:* You lease with the option of purchase? No; not altogether that. I lease it and pay 1s. 6d. per ion. Of that sum 9d. goes in rent and 9d. goes towards the purchase.
10446. *By Mr. Nielson:* How much have you paid for the purchase of your land so far? £400.
10448. *By the Chairman:* And you will lose that? Decidedly.
10449. *By Mr. Nielson:* What is your purchasing price per acre? £6.
10450. Would you not be able to raise the balance of your purchase money and buy your farm clean out? I do not know. That is what I would like to do if I could.
10451. Could you borrow the money in town? I do not think I could borrow the money in Cairns, as the banks will not touch it.
10452. Would you be prepared to pay off the balance to the company? Yes.
10453. Is there any other means of disposing of your cane than by selling it to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? No.
10454. How far are you from the main line? Two miles, and it is mountainous country.
10455. It would not pay to cart it? No.
10456. Do you think there will be sufficient labour for the coming season? I think so, because very little labour is required in Hambledon. Twenty-five men will cut all the registered cane this year. The cane is handled by Chinamen, and so long as they are in Hambledon we shall not require much labour.
10457. What about the district generally? They will require a lot at Mulgrave, because it is white-grown cane. Possibly they will want 300 men to cut the cane there.
10458. What is your opinion as to the likelihood of getting it? I believe if the farmer is in a position to offer a good wage he will get good men, and will be able to attract men from all parts of Australia. I speak from experience of travelling round looking for work myself, and wherever there was work offering men used to flock to it in droves.
10459. Do you think the wages you mentioned as a reasonable rate are sufficient to attract men? I do.
10460. *By the Chairman:* When you say there will be a sufficiency of labour, do you take into consideration the fact that there will be a great number of kanakas leaving the State, and there will be more demand everywhere for white labour? I speak of this year.
10461. *By Mr. Nielson:* At the end of this season when the kanakas have gone, or at any rate have no longer any right to work in the industry, do you think there will be sufficient men obtainable in Australia then? Yes, decidedly, in Australia.
10462. Do you think the wages you have mentioned are sufficient to induce men to come to the sugar districts from any part of Australia? I do.
10463. You are aware that during the crushing season there will always be a larger number of men required than during the slack season? Yes.
10464. Do you not think it would be a good thing if those men could be kept in the sugar districts? I do.
10465. Can you suggest anything that would either give work or be an inducement for them to remain in the vicinity of the sugar districts? There is always a certain amount of work other than on the farms in the slack season. There is woodcutting for the mills.
10466. How is it done at present? It has been done by blacks up till now. Some men put in a tender, but others put in a tender to do the work with Hindoos, and white men cannot tender low enough to get it.
10467. Do you think, if the mills made it a condition in their contracts that white labour must be employed in cutting wood, it would make a lot of work for men? Decidedly.
10468. Roughly speaking, what would be the increased cost of cutting wood by white labour as against blacks or Hindoos? I cannot speak as an expert on that matter.
10469. How does the price of the contractor with black labour compare with the one who wants to do with white labour? I think the difference would be 3s. a cord, roughly speaking.

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10470. About 25 or 30 per cent. in the cost? Yes; I think it would be that much.
10471. Is there anything else besides the off-season work? I think it would be some inducement if married men could come here and bring their wives and families.
10472. What inducement do you think they should get? If the mill people would let them have a house without rent to begin with, the farmer might give them an acre or two and let them cultivate a bit on their own when they were doing nothing else. That could be done without much trouble. Most of the farmers have a few acres that they could let out to others. That would be the means of married men with families taking up land, and it would encourage the young generation to do the same. The way it is now in the North the young generation do not want to go on to the land, and that is a serious thing for the North.
10473. Generally speaking, is it because there is not sufficient inducement for the people to go on the land? Yes. As it is, the land is dear in price, and if the white man will not take it up at the Chinaman's price he can go somewhere else.
10474. He is squeezed out? Yes. Years ago, when Alomba was let to farmers, only one Chinaman took up a farm, and to-day they are practically all Chinamen there. The price of cane was such that the white men had to give in.
10475. Was the rent too high for white men? I do not know exactly what the rent was.
10476. They took it out of the cane, anyway? Yes.
10477. Since the passage of the Commonwealth legislation has there been any inducement given by the mill to white men to enter the industry? Only as regards a little higher price. Had it not been for federation, I believe there would not have been a white man left on a farm at Hambleton.
10478. Have the company given any inducement which would enable a white farmer to register and employ white labour exclusively? No. They made no difference in the price.
10479. You have had three or four years in which you might have availed yourselves of the bonus provisions of the Commonwealth Act, and yet very few in this district have registered—is that because sufficient inducement has not been given by the company? The company did not stop you by saying they would not take your cane if you registered; but they did not hold out any special inducement if you registered.
10480. *By the Chairman:* They did not start any white gangs to cut your cane, or anything of that sort? No.
10481. Have they made any endeavour themselves to work the industry by white labour? None whatever. As a matter of fact, there was a farm registered, and when it fell back into their hands it lapsed into black labour again.
10482. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think they would have been able to obtain the necessary labour if they had tried? They could have obtained some to begin with. Of course the place was not as well advertised then as it is to-day. People are flocking here now, and there was nobody coming at that time.
10483. *By the Chairman:* You are aware, I suppose, that the Mossman Central Mill Company have had no difficulty in getting gangs of white cane cutters? I saw that stated in the papers.
10484. Could not the same be done here? Yes; provided you can pay the price.
10485. *By Mr. Nielson:* The mill at the Mossman has engaged the labour? Yes. Of course the farmers there are both growers and manufacturers.
10486. If you got the same price for your cane as they get at the Mossman, could you get white gangs? Then I could get sufficient men at the wages I mentioned. If I could not get them here, I would be in a position to go South and get them.
10487. *By the Chairman:* How long have you lived in this district? Between eight and nine years.
10488. Are you a married man? Yes.
10489. Have you a family? No.
10490. From your experience of other districts, is there any reason why white men should not work here? No. It has a first-rate climate. It is hot after Christmas, but I have felt hotter days in New South Wales. We have a beautiful climate for nine months in the year.
10491. I suppose you have not troubled your head about the deportation of the kanakas? I have thought of it.
10492. Have you formed any opinion as to the best method of getting rid of them without unnecessary hardship to them? I have never considered that aspect of the question, but I have looked at the financial aspect. The manufacturer should bear the entire cost of deportation. At all times he has been getting the lion's share of the benefit of the kanaka, if there was any benefit, although it might be an indirect one, because, so far as this district is concerned, sugar has always been at a minimum price.
10493. As there are no Crown lands in the district, would a distance of a few miles mill take against men settling down on small areas where they could leave their wives and families and return say once a month? It is not a fair thing to expect a man to leave his wife in the bush. I left my wife last Monday week while I went to town, as I was on the jury, and during my absence a kanaka tried to get into the house; and this is supposed to be a thickly-settled place. It would be all right if the people were settled in a group; but where is the land?
10494. *By Mr. Nielson:* Supposing the Atherton Scrub was cut into 40-acre blocks? There is good country there; but there are only patches here and there in this district.
10495. *By the Chairman:* On 40-acre blocks in the Atherton Scrub women would not be lonely? The men would be going in for dairying on their own account, and would not come down here.
10496. *By Mr. Nielson:* While a man without capital was fulfilling his conditions and making his improvements, would he not in most cases have to go out to earn the money to do that? The chances are he would not come here, but that he would go to the mining districts.
10497. Would he not come here in the crushing season? There would be no special inducement for him to come, because he could get as much money, and possibly more, up there. I would go mining if I lived up at Atherton.
10498. There is a reserve of 400 acres at Spence's Crossing—a few families could be settled there? Grass country is not much good for cultivation.
10499. You could make a good garden? You want a bit of good scrub land. I would not take a wife to a piece of forest country.

THOMAS BINNIE, Cane Farmer, examined :

- T. Winnie. 10500. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer. I represent the Hambledon Farmers' Association.
 11 May, 1906. 10501. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many members are there in the association? About twenty. All the white growers at Hambledon are financial members.
 10502. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your farm? 260 or 270 acres.
 10503. How much is under cane? About 150 acres.
 10504. Have you any registered? About 80 acres are registered.
 10505. I suppose the 80 acres were out of hand before you registered? I would not have registered if they had not been.
 10506. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not intend to register next year? I cannot help myself.
 10507. You are not asked to register? If you do not register, you have to chance your labour. Your present labour is taken away from you.
 10508. You registered in order to obtain labour? I registered to assist in getting labour.
 10509. *By the Chairman*: How do you expect to be situated as regards labour this year? I feel very insecure.
 10510. *By Mr. Nielson*: Then why did you register? Because I can fall back upon black labour if I cannot obtain white labour. I have ten kanakas. I have got a cutting here from the *Queenslander* of the 5th May, which states that sixty farmers were unable to obtain a man to help them to harvest their maize crops.
 10512. Does it say what price they were offered? It says that at the Herbert River they had great difficulty in making up two gangs.
 10513. Does it say the price? No.
 10514. That shows the unreliability of it? But they had a difficulty in getting men.
 10515. If you wanted 1,000 men here you would have great difficulty in getting them to come for nothing? I presume the farmers offered something.
 10516. Well, say the maize is worth 1s. 6d. to 2s. as it is? It is worth from 1s. 9d. to 1s. 11d.
 10517. You can understand then that they cannot afford to pay too much for pulling it? Our price is 13s. 3d., and we cannot compete with the Southern men in getting labour. If you would allow me to read what I have written down I can go straight ahead, as I have some rough notes here. I have had twenty-eight years' experience in North Queensland in the pastoral, mining, and canegrowing industries. I have been canegrowing for eleven years. It is my impression that this Commission has come far too late.
 10518. That is not our fault? No, exactly; but this has got to go to the public. We farmers demanded a Royal Commission; in fact, we almost went on our knees and prayed for a Royal Commission.
 10519. As to what? As to the legislation.
 10520. We are not inquiring into that? Legislation and the labour question go together, and you are inquiring into the labour. You cannot get away from the fact that they go together. The legislation has interfered with the labour.
 10521. We are not discussing the question as to whether the kanaka should be retained? I know that quite well. My impression is that had they appointed a Royal Commission such as you are before legislating some proposals would have been made for deporting the kanakas and supplying their places in plenty of time. But now the evil is done. Mr. Ellis, who gave evidence before you as the representative of the Sugar Workers' Union, stated that the rate of wage the union agreed upon was 25s a week and found in the slack season, and 30s a week and found in the crushing season. As more men will be employed in the crushing season than in the slack season, this averages 28s. per week. Rations will cost the farmer at least 12s. a week, so that means £2 for each man per week. The average wage paid to the kanaka was 15s. a week, including rations. Mr. Ellis stated that it would take nearly as many white men to take the place of the 6,000 kanakas who were going. To grow an acre of cane by kanaka labour would cost £12. The average price paid for cane is 13s. 7½d. per ton, and, allowing 18 tons to the acre, that comes to £12 4s. 10½d. per acre, which leaves to the farmer a profit of 4s. 10½d. per acre.
 10522. Was £12 the cost of working? That was the cost of putting it into the mill by kanaka labour. Taking white labour at double the wages which I have shown it will cost for kanakas, that makes £24 to grow an acre by white labour.
 10523. Your deductions are not sound? I will stand on my figures, as I am talking from experience.
 10524. I am taking your figures, but I do not care about your deductions? My deductions come from practical experience. The white labour will cost double, I know, because I employ white labour, and I have had practical experience. The value of an 18-ton crop is £12 4s. 10½d. per acre, which, with the addition of the bonus of 5s., makes another £4 10s.—namely, £16 11s. 10½d. As it costs £24 per acre to grow it with white labour, that represents a loss to the farmer of £7 5s. 1½d. per acre. Up to the present the white labour grown cane which has been receiving the bounty has been living on the produce of the black man's work. The kanaka cleared, stumped, and grubbed the land and planted the cane, and the white man is growing it, but in the future everything will have to be done by the white man. The possibility of getting white labour is uncertain. As I pointed out before from the *Queenslander* cutting, if the Southern farmers cannot get men to pull their corn, I do not see how the Northern men are going to get them to work in the canefields. Out West shearers are scarce, and, from my experience out there, I would sooner go shearing or fossicking or mining than work in the canefields. The whole conditions of canegrowing are not such as will attract the white man. Suppose a rush takes place out back, you will have half of your white men away to the rush.
 10525. I think a lot of the Hambledon farmers would go too? We have established homes, and if we leave, we leave something behind us. If the employee leaves, he simply walks off with all his possessions on his back. We have to leave our capital behind us if we go away. The whole thing, of course, hinges on the price of cane.
 10526. How much do you want in order to enable you to pay white labour? Well, you can work it out from the figures I gave.
 10527. I will not take your figures at all, because I disagree with them? They are correct.

10528. I do not agree with them? I put them down from my books.

10529. They are different to anybody else's? I do not care what they are different to, and I challenge anyone to contradict them.

10530. Give us the figures as to what it would cost to work it with white labour? It will cost double the cost with black labour. I have already given that.

10531. Give us the figures as to what price for cane you require? If you have 18 tons to the acre you must have enough to cover £24—that is, you will want 30s. a ton to make a profit on 18 tons of plant cane.

10532. Is it going to cost £24 to work 18 tons with white labour? Undoubtedly.

10533. How many men do you want per acre, or how many acres per man? You want a man for every 10 acres.

10534. Kanakas the same? I am taking the figures quoted by the representative of the Sugar Workers' Union.

10535. I do not take those figures either? I am just quoting from the evidence already given, and I am quite certain that no man can cultivate more than 10 acres, I do not care if he is white or black.

10536. And will he be required all the year round to cultivate those 10 acres? Practically, he will.

10537. And yet you have not employed any man on that 80-acre block of yours since you registered it on the 21st of January, and it is now the 11th of May? That is correct. I am losing on it.

10538. You are not spending anything on it? I would have to spend 1s. on it to make 6d. The land is neglected.

10539. What crop do you reckon you will have on this 80-acre block? Ten tons to the acre.

10540. How, ratoons? Plant cane and first and second ratoons.

10541. How do you think people do in other districts who are paying these rates of wages? I would like to see it done. I do not believe they are paying these rates of wages at all.

10542. Not 25s. a week? No; not in the slack season. I do not believe they can afford it unless they have virgin scrub land. On virgin scrub land you employ half the labour that you require on old cultivated land, and you get three times the crop. I have not seen where they are paying these wages yet. I have got some figures here as to the price of cane, but I understand you are not dealing with the price.

10543. *By the Chairman:* We are not? It would assist my evidence materially if you were.

10544. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you desire to bring forward that evidence because you consider that the price you are receiving for your cane materially affects your ability to pay white men's wages? It is very material. The average price paid at Hambledon last year was 13s. 7½d. per ton. We have competition in this district for labour, and we are not in a position to compete successfully. If we get a lower price for our cane, we cannot afford to pay the same wages. The average sugar content of our cane was 12.8 per cent. The average price paid last year at the Mulgrave was 20s. 5d., and the average sugar content was 12 per cent. Supposing our sugar content had only been 12 per cent., we would only have been paid 12s. a ton on the Hambledon scale. The Mulgrave price was 6s. 9½d. per ton higher than we got on the analysis value, and, with the 8 added, which would be equal to another 1s. 7½d., it means a total difference of 8s. 5d. a ton; so that we are unable to compete with the Mulgrave farmers for labour to the extent of 8s. 5d. a ton.

10545. *By the Chairman:* Why cannot Hambledon mill pay you as much as the Mulgrave farmers get? They can buy raw sugar from the Mulgrave people to enable them to pay it; but we have no means of checking them, and we are in their hands. I am quite willing to admit, on the other hand, that we made contracts under the then existing labour conditions.

10546. Then the position is due to the fact that you had the misfortune to make a bad bargain? In a way, that is so.

10547. *By Mr. Paget:* What were the then existing labour conditions? We had kanaka labour then.

10548. *By Mr. Nielson:* Was not that contract altered when the first Bounty Bill was passed? It was altered on the basis of the difference in the duty, not on the altered labour conditions. The market of Australia was then opened to us.

10549. But you have employed nothing but kanaka labour—were you satisfied with the 13s. a ton last year? Certainly not.

10550. Were you satisfied the year before last? Yes; we got 17s. then. I went on individual analysis last year, and I got a very high price for my cane.

10551. You have altered from a payment of 11s. a ton to an analysis basis? Yes.

10552. Were you all agreeable to the alteration? It was the usual pistol held at your head. You had to take it or else stick to the original 11s. a ton.

10553. Was the original agreement on a sliding scale? No; it was an absolute fixed price of 11s. a ton.

10554. Irrespective of the price of the raw manufactured product? Irrespective of anything. At the Mulgrave mill over 90 per cent. sugar is bagged. Although a lot of cane below 7 per cent., and at 7 per cent. is treated, full price is given at the Mulgrave mill. If a Hambledon farmer sends in 7 per cent. cane, he only gets 2s. a ton.

10555. *By Mr. Paget:* Do they take delivery at the Mulgrave mill of cane containing only 7 per cent. of sugar? If I were the cane inspector I would not take it; but the chemist at the Mulgrave mill says it is passed in.

10556. You are not speaking now from hearsay? I am speaking from actual information.

10557. *By Mr. Nielson:* They take as bad cane down our way? Sometimes they cannot help it. Possibly one part of a field will go well, and another part of it may be poor. If 6 per cent. cane were sent into the Hambledon mill the farmer would get nothing for it.

10558. *By the Chairman:* If you could get the price that other people are getting, you would have no difficulty in paying the wages of white labour? If we got the same price as the Mulgrave mill pays, we would have no difficulty. But that would not relieve us from the trouble of getting labour. I do not think the labour is in Australia.

10559. The money that ought to pay the wages of white men is going somewhere else? If we made a slight loss on our plant cane, we could make it up on our ratoons. If we were getting 20s. a ton, like the Mulgrave farmers are getting, and the 5s. bonus, we would be in a position to employ the labour, but

T. Minnie.
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- T. Binnie. not to pay 25s. a week in the slack season. I think that is ridiculous. We could pay £1 2s. in the slack season, and even 35s. a week in the crushing season.
- 11 May, 1906. 10560. Men have told us they would be perfectly satisfied with £1 a week and found in the slack season if they were comfortably housed? Under the Shearers and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act men have to be properly housed; but I have not seen a farmer yet who was not willing to house his men better than in bothies. The farmer houses and feeds his men better than he feeds himself in nine cases out of ten.
10561. You think there is not sufficient labour in Australia for the industry? I am positive of it. Wherever we have inquired they are short of labour. The knockabout man is not the man we want.
10562. By Mr. Nielson: You do not expect the man in a job to come along? Why not open the country and let us indent labour from Europe?
10563. There is nothing to prevent you doing it? I beg your pardon. There is the Immigration Restriction Act, which prevents a man coming in under agreement.
10564. By the Chairman: Do you not know that that Act has been amended by later legislation? But you have to get the consent of the Minister.
10565. By Mr. Nielson: All you have to do is to show the Minister that the labour is not available, and, if you are so positive, you should have no difficulty in doing that? We are trying to show you that it is not available.
10566. You have not given any proof; you simply say you think so—If you want labour, you have not to approach us, but the Federal Minister? Two men came to me for a contract for trashing. My neighbour put them on, and they were pulling off the green leaves and everything else, and were ruining the man's cane—bleeding it. Are we to put up with that?
10567. By the Chairman: If you once showed them that it was only necessary to take off the dead leaves they would only do that? But are we to teach our labour?
10568. By Mr. Nielson: You had to teach the kanaka when he first arrived? No; we had other kanakas to teach him. One kanaka would teach another better than a white man would teach him.
10569. By the Chairman: There was a time when white men had to teach the kanakas? Undoubtedly. We all had to be taught; but are we to pay the highest wages, when in New South Wales and other places they can get experts? Up North we have got to pay the highest price and yet teach them what they have to do.
10570. Do you not think that the amount of teaching is immaterial, as you could take the hoe out of a man's hand and show him how it could be done in two or three minutes? The Colonial Sugar Refining Company put on a gang of white men to trash cane the other day, but they had to discharge every man because they found that the trashing alone would eat up the whole amount.
10571. By Mr. Nielson: What sort of cane was it? Really splendid trashing cane. My "boys" would do it for 15s. a week.
10572. How long were they working for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? Three or four weeks.
10573. It took the Colonial Sugar Refining Company three or four weeks to discover that it was costing them too much? No. Two weeks before they were discharged we were told by Mr. Farquhar that it would not pay to trash with white labour.
10574. They were working on cane, I believe, that would not go 5 tons to the acre? That is the easiest cane to trash.
10575. Would it pay to trash a 5-ton crop? Undoubtedly it would, with kanakas.
10576. But with white men? It would pay better to trash it first than to leave it and cut it afterwards.
10577. It will not pay down Bundaberg way—We generally turn in a mob of cows? You must be well off there. I can take a 5-ton crop any day and make it pay.
10578. You admit that when these men were discharged last month they were working on very inferior cane? I do not say that. I saw the cane they were working on, and Mr. Farquhar told the meeting of farmers that it did not pay to trash the cane, and they were working in a 12-ton crop, and it was one of the easiest and best crops to trash, as it was all standing up.
10579. You know that in some parts of Queensland they maintain that it does not pay to trash cane by kanaka labour, and they never do it? I differ with that. It always pays to trash cane.
10580. Other people differ, too? I speak from personal experience.
10581. By Mr. Paget: You are speaking of cane cultivation in the tropics? Yes. It always pays to trash cane. It pays in three ways. It pays for density for that year, it pays because it makes easy cutting, and it pays for the cultivation of the next year.
10582. By Mr. Nielson: But you did not see the particular block at the time these men were knocked off? I did not. I am merely giving the information that Mr. Farquhar, of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, gave me. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company are getting up gangs of white men to cut our cane. I asked him would it not be advisable to get those men up earlier, so that they could trash, and we could give them the job of trashing. He then said that it did not pay to trash cane with white labour.
10583. You think it will not pay to trash cane by white labour in a general way? No; it will not pay.
10584. By the Chairman: Is there anything more? Well, if it does not pay to trash with white labour it does not pay to employ white labour in the slack season at all. You will have to pay a higher price for white men if you want them in the cutting season. It is like everything else. Unless you can give employment to white labour throughout the year, you must pay more when you want them.
10585. For temporary work? Yes; for temporary work.
10586. By Mr. Paget: If you do not trash your cane you do not get the higher price you should from the cane being ripened up? You lessen the value of your cane.
10587. You sell on analysis? Yes.
10588. And if your cane is untrashed you reduce the value of it? Yes.
10589. And you are worse off? Yes.
10590. By Mr. Nielson: How often have you been in the habit of trashing your cane? Twice. It pays to trash it twice. The first trashing is for easy cutting, and the second trashing is for ripening.
10591. By Mr. Paget: You trash in February, then again in May or June? It depends on the growth. We trash first from February to March, and then again in May, June, or July, six or seven weeks before

we cut. The kanaka repatriation is touching us very severely, and I would like to speak on that. I T. Binnie.
refer to this business of having to pay the extra passage money. We introduced our kanakas, and
deposited £5 per head for repatriation. Now the Government is demanding £2 to £4 more for it. I have 11 May, 1906.
signed on ten kanakas, who finish their time at the end of this year. The Government have held the
money for one of these "boys" since 1891—that is the £5—and yet they say they are going to make a
demand on me for the extra passage money.

10592. *By Mr. Nielson*: Has he been in your employ since 1891? He has been in my employ since
1896. He will give evidence himself here to-day.

10593. *By the Chairman*: Do you think it will be an advantage as regards repatriation if the ships came
to Trinity Bay and took the "boys" straight from here? Undoubtedly it would.

10594. It is a disadvantage for the "boys" to go from here to Bundaberg to ship? It is an expense to
the employer.

10595. It is an expense to somebody? Yes.

10596. Do you know any reason why the ships should not come to Trinity Bay? No, it is nearer.

10597. *By Mr. Nielson*: They do not like sailing through the Barrier Reef? There is an opening
through the reef. The "Fearless" sailed through there for years. They could load a boat up here easy
enough if they wished. Forty odd went one Saturday, and on the following Tuesday I had ten more
ready. If the boat had been here I could easily have got a load for her. Every kanaka in the place
would have gone if they had only got the chance to go.

10598. *By Mr. Paget*: The difficulty shipowners have to contend with is that a great number of the
islanders will not go home when a ship does come here? That is the trouble that we have. We
have paid the extra passage money down to Bundaberg for a number of "boys," and when they get
there they re-engage, and we are done out of our money.

10599. *By the Chairman*: That is an additional reason why the boats should start loading in Port Douglas
and work down? Yes. My opinion is that, knowing the number of kanakas that are going away, some
steps should be taken to put on a steamer.

10600. Would not that involve sending out a large number at one time? You can take 400 or 500 at one
time.

10601. Would it be wise to dump down 400 or 500 on the islands—Would not the food supply be short?
I have been speaking to numbers of "boys," and I think that much more is made of this business of the
food supply than is warranted.

10603. *By the Chairman*: The labour schooners cannot buy food in the islands? That is because the
"boys" will not sell it. The labour schooners cannot buy sweet potatoes here although there are plenty
in the place. I cannot buy half a ton of corn although there is plenty at Cairns.

10604. Are they making a "corner" there? Yes, and the "boys" are just as cunning.

10605. *By Mr. Paget*: You are of opinion that there will be no difficulty in deporting 5,000 or 6,000
islanders at the end of this year? I have no experience of the islands myself.

10606. We have had evidence from men who passed their lives in this trade? They ought to know more
about it than I do.

10607. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else? One thing I would strongly impress on you is that
if the "boys" are not repatriated quickly, some means should be taken to have control over them and
not let them walk about as a danger to the country.

10608. How would you suggest that they be controlled? Allow the farmers to employ them with the
consent of the Inspector for Pacific Islanders.

10609. *By Mr. Paget*: The Federal Act says distinctly you must not employ them? Well, let the
Federal Government do the work. They legislate first, and inquire afterwards, like all the blessed
legislation in Australia.

10610. *By Mr. Nielson*: They are not inquiring? Yes; they legislated first and inquired after. We
farmers got on our knees and prayed for an inquiry to be held. I attended the conference at Townsville,
and I brought up a proposition that we ask the Federal Government to appoint a Royal Commission
to inquire into everything before legislating. Instead of that, they legislate first and inquire afterwards,
or they do not inquire at all.

10610A. *By Mr. Paget*: The Federal Government are not inquiring? No?

10611. You are of opinion that during the period that must elapse before the Pacific Islanders can be
repatriated farmers should be allowed to employ the islanders, and that the inspectors should have
complete control of the "boys"? It is either that or the Government will have to find them in food.

10612. During what term? Until a ship is available.

10613. *By Mr. Nielson*: At what work would you employ them? At tropical agriculture as defined in
the Pacific Islanders Act.

10614. That is practically confined to sugar, and the farmer will lose his bonus if he employs them? Not
a bit. There are hundreds of farmers who would put in coffee and other tropical crops, or they could
clear a bit of land for tropical crops.

10615. *By the Chairman*: For how long a period would you allow such re-engagements to continue?
Until the "boys" could be taken away. You could not fix a period; but as soon as a ship was available,
the inspector would give the farmers notice to knock them off.

10616. Do you think farmers would engage any considerable number of men on such terms? I would.

10617. Your labour might be taken away in the middle of the season at the whim of an inspector? I
certainly would employ some. I am positive they would get employment, and they would be under
control.

10618. *By Mr. Paget*: And they would be earning wages? Yes, and they would not be a danger to
the district. The walk-about "boys" are becoming a serious matter at the present time.

10619. You think they are a menace to the peace of the community? Undoubtedly they are. The
"boys" must have food. I have potatoes growing, and the "boys" will come and dig them up, and I
cannot blame them. I should do the same if I were starving.

10620. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think there are any "boys" in such low circumstances at the present
time? Undoubtedly. A kanaka never saves a penny. Of course, there is money for them in the
Government Savings Bank; but that is all spent before they go home. Many of the "boys" have been
filling up their boxes, and the boxes are not worth anything; they are not tucker.

PETER PETERSEN, Cane Farmer, examined:

- P. Petersen. 10621. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer, on South Hambleton.
 11 May, 1906. 10622. What is it you wish to say? To carry on the sugar industry in the North with white labour without immigration is a failure. I was the first farmer in the Cairns district to register, and I carried on for two and a-half years with white labour. There are times when you can get plenty of white labour, and there are times when you can get none. If there happens to be a bit of a rush in the mining districts up country there is very little labour available here. The majority of the men who are here to-day are somewhere else to-morrow. The farmers cannot depend upon them. I do not think we can get white labour in North Queensland without immigration.
 10623. From what part of the world would you suggest immigration should take place? I am well acquainted with Scandinavia, and there are as good farm labourers there as anywhere else.
 10624. Could you get labourers from there? Yes, provided the Immigration Restriction Act was amended. I have not employed many kanakas, but I think it is very foolish to deport them all at once, because we have not proved yet that we can carry on without their labour. It would be advisable to keep 2,000 or 3,000 another year at least to see how we are going to get on. I have always believed in a white Australia, but I do not believe in slinging out dirty water until you have got clean. There is another matter I would like to touch upon, though you may say that it is outside the scope of the Commission. I do not wish to touch upon politics, but the sugar industry is nothing but politics from beginning to end. The Queensland Government have gone to the expense of employing a sugar expert to teach the farmers how to grow sugar, but we have no one to help us to get a fair share of what we produce. What is the good of paying an expert to show us how to produce an article when we may get nothing out of it? If we received some assistance in getting a fair share of what we produce, that would help us more than anything else.
 10625. *By Mr. Paget:* In what way do you require assistance? If the Government could assist us by converting private mills into co-operative mills, on the same lines as the central mills, that would be a great help. It means capital, but it would be a good investment. There is no industry in Australia with a better prospect than sugar for white men if it is looked after.
 10626. *By the Chairman:* Then you are sanguine as to the future of the industry in Australia? Not under the present conditions. There will have to be great alterations.
 10627. Is there any other subject you wish to address us on? No. Mr. Binnie and Mr. Campbell have gone into figures, and there is no need for me to go over the same ground.
 10628. Do you agree with the figures they gave? I endorse them pretty well.

AUGUST RÜTTINGER, General Farm Labourer, examined:

- A. Rüttinger. 10629. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A labourer at the present time.
 11 May, 1906. 10630. Where are you employed? I am not employed. I have been out of work a couple of days from the mill.
 10631. How long were you employed there? I was there last year for three months, and lately for seven weeks.
 10632. What were you doing? Trashing.
 10633. What wages were you getting? £1 a week and rations.
 10634. Why did you leave? We got the "sack."
 10635. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many of you? Six of us.
 10636. *By the Chairman:* Why were you discharged? There were three white men—although I can hardly call them men—who would not work, and there were three of us who were hard-working men.
 10637. *By Mr. Nielson:* Were you all in the one gang? Yes.
 10638. *By the Chairman:* There were three good men, and three who were no good? Yes; and they sacked the lot of us on Friday morning.
 10639. *By Mr. Paget:* Did you, or any of you, tell Dr. Reed, the manager, that you did not understand the work of trashing cane? No.
 10640. *By Mr. Nielson:* Had you done any trashing before? Yes.
 10641. And all the men done it before? I do not know. I did not know the men. There are so many men coming every day, and that is where the mistake will be.

SAM KEREK, Pacific Islander, examined:

- Sam Kerek. 10642. *By Mr. Nielson:* What island do you belong to? Tanna.
 11 May, 1906. 10643. How long have you been in Queensland? Twenty years.
 10644. Are you married? No.

Witness handed in the following statement:—

I have been twenty years in Queensland altogether. I came first to Te Kowai, Mackay; first recruiter in "Borough Belle," "Empress," and "Fearless"; work along a Mr Binnie ten years; do not want to go home; too old; think more better stop where I work all my life; not Christian, used to food all the same Queensland.

(Hambleton. At Mr. Thomas Binnie's Residence.)

FRIDAY EVENING, 11 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

WILLIAM HENRY CLARK, General Labourer, examined:

- W. H. Clark. 10645. *By Mr. Paget:* What are you? A general labourer employed at Hambleton mill; but I am not a permanent hand. I have been trashing for the last six weeks. For nine months previously I was doing
 11 May, 1906. general work on the Johnstone River.
 10646. Is it your intention to follow up work in the sugar industry? Yes. I have been doing it for the past seven years, and during that time I have also been doing general bush work in New South Wales when there was no work on the sugar plantations.

10647. How do you find work on the sugar plantations compare with general bush work? I think the work in the cane-fields is the easier, and I have worked at it right through the summer months. W. H. Clark.
10648. What wages have you hitherto received for working in the cane-fields? I have been getting 20s. a week and found for general field work, but I have not done any cutting or loading at that price. 11 May, 1906.
10649. What wages do you expect in the future? I shall be satisfied with 20s. a week and my keep for steady employment at general field work.
10650. Are you a member of the Sugar Workers' Union? No.

WILLIAM BURKE, General Labourer, examined:

10651. By Mr. Paget: What are you? A general labourer.
10652. Are you out of employment? No. I have been working at Hambleton for the past three months, chipping and trashing, for 20s. a week and found. For eight months prior to that I worked at Mr. R. M. Shannon's, at Mackay, doing general field work. During the crushing season I cut and loaded cane at 4s. per ton. The cane was trashed, and the gang had to load on to portable trams and also shift the tramline. W. Burke.
10653. What did the cane average? 20 tons per acre.
10654. How much did you earn at it? Earned 45s. per week clear of my keep. 11 May, 1906.
10655. Did you work on the share-and-share system? There were seven men in the gang, and we worked on the co-operative system, and nearly all of us went through the season. One man had to go to New South Wales, and we let him go. Another man was not well, and we put another man on in his place.
10656. Are you a member of the Sugar Workers' Union? No.
10657. Do you anticipate any difficulty in finding plenty of work during the coming season? No.
10658. Do you think there will be any deficiency in the supply of labour, especially after the current year? I do not think there will be any deficiency. I think a large number of young fellows will come up here if the inducements offered are sufficient.
10659. What inducements should be sufficient? I think the wages in the slack season should be 25s. a week and found, and for cane-cutting and loading 32s. 6d. a week and found.
10660. How many white men do you think will be required to fill the places of the 6,000 kanakas who may not be allowed to work in the sugar industry after the end of this year? Five thousand.
10661. It has been suggested that a system of workers' references might be of service to the employer as well as to the employer—Do you favour such a system? I think it would be a very good thing indeed.
10662. Would you like to be able to settle down on a small piece of land with the object of making a home for yourself, and of working in the sugar-fields when not engaged on your own land? I am very much in favour of such a scheme.
10663. What area of good land do you think would be required for such holdings? Ten to 20 acres would be sufficient.
10664. Do you find cane-cutting, loading, and general work in this climate too laborious? No.
10665. Are you a temperate man? I am temperate, and have never missed my work through liquor.

ALEXANDER BRODIE CRAMPTON, Ploughman, examined:

10666. By Mr. Paget: What are you? I am a ploughman employed by Messrs. Mann Bros., Hambleton. A. B. Crampton.
10667. You have heard the evidence given by the preceding witness—Do you generally agree with it? Yes. 11 May, 1906.
10668. What wages do you get? I am a permanent hand. Farmers generally pay better wages than the millowners. I am getting 25s. a week and found.
10669. How long have you been here? I have been in the Cairns district for eighteen months.
10670. Where did you come from? My father is a cane-grower at Gin Gin. I have been used to cane cultivation all my life.
10671. What labour did your father employ? He used to employ kanaka labour, but he has been using white labour for some years, and he finds it as cheap as the kanaka.
10672. Do you think there will be a sufficiency of labour after the present year? I think there will be no scarcity.
10673. I understand that you can give some evidence as to whether married men at Hambleton have to pay rent for their cottages? I know a ploughman at Hambleton who is paid 22s. 6d. a week and 8s. a week for rations, with a bonus of £5 per annum, paid from Christmas to Christmas. This man is paying 3s. 6d. per week rent for his cottage, and he has to pay for his firewood—7s. per load sawn, and 5s. per load uncut. The rents range from 3s. 6d. to 20s. per week, according to the class of house.
10674. I do not wish to receive any hearsay evidence—Are you in a position to state that what you have just told me is a fact? My friend told me himself.
10675. How does the work here suit you? I never lose any time. I am a total abstainer.

JOHN WALTER COOPER, General Labourer, examined:

10676. By Mr. Paget: What are you? I am a general labourer.
10677. Are you out of employment? I have been employed at Hambleton for the past month at 20s. a week and found, at general field work. J. W. Cooper.
10678. Where did you work before? I came from the Richmond River as the representative of twenty men to see whether sufficient inducements were being held out in this district for them to come up. 11 May, 1906.
10679. You are aware that a larger number of white men will be required during the current year to harvest the cane crop than has been required in the past—Do you think there will be sufficient labour procurable? I do not think there will be any shortage of labour this year.
10680. Do you approve of the contract prices for cane-cutting and loading that are now being offered by the Mulgrave Central Mill Company? Yes; they are suitable.
10681. Have you seen their form of agreement? Yes.
10682. There is one clause dealing with intemperate men, and men who bring drink into the camp. Do you approve of that? Yes. I approve of the terms of the agreement generally, and particularly of that clause. I am a total abstainer myself.

- J. W. Cooper. 10683. Do you approve of a scheme for establishing workers' homes? Yes; but I think the area should be 25 acres. If such a system could be brought into operation, it would induce plenty of young fellows to come from the South.
- 11 May, 1906. 10684. Do you think there will be plenty of white labour available for the industry after the end of this year? I think a sufficient number of white men can be procured from New South Wales and Victoria, provided good wages are paid.
10685. What wages do you think suitable? During the off season the wages should be 27s. 6d. a week and found, and for cutting and loading 42s. a week and found.
10686. For what number of hours? Fifty-eight hours per week.
10687. If the farmers had to pay such wages, do you think it would be necessary that the bounty should be continued? Most decidedly; the bonus system must be continued.
10688. Are you a member of the Sugar Workers' Union? No.

ALEXANDER BRODIE CRAMPTON, further examined:

- A. B. Crampton. 10689. *By Mr. Paget*: What is it you wish to say? Having heard the evidence given by Mr. Cooper, I desire to say that I think a wage of 27s. a week and found for the slack season, or 6s. a day and find themselves, would be sufficient, and 30s. a week and found for cutting and loading. The number of hours should be fifty-one per week.
- 11 May, 1906. 10690. Would it not be advisable to leave the contract prices for agreement between the parties? Yes.
10691. Do you think the farmers could pay the wages you have indicated if they had no protection? I think the continuance of the bounty a necessity, but some mills do not pay enough for the cane to enable the farmers to pay such wages as are necessary to induce workers to come permanently into the industry.

WILLIAM CLARKE, General Labourer, examined:

- W. Clarke. 10692. What are you? A general labourer.
- 11 May, 1906. 10693. Are you one of the unemployed? No; I am employed at Hambledon at general farm work, and am at present drilling out for cane-planting.
10694. Where did you come from? I have been used to such work on the Richmond River.
10695. You have heard the evidence given by previous witnesses? Yes. I generally approve of what they have said.
10696. What about wages? I think wages should be 25s. a week and found during the slack season, and 30s. a week and found for cutting and loading.
10697. How many hours per week? Eight hours per day.
10698. Have you anything further to say? At Hambledon, when we are idle through wet weather, ration money at the rate of 8s. per week is stopped from our wages. I think rations should be allowed during wet weather.
10699. What wages were you in the habit of receiving on the Richmond River? 25s. a week and found during the slack season, and 30s. a week and found for cutting and loading.

(Cairns II.)

MONDAY, 14 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.
MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

DABBY LYON, General Labourer, examined:

- D. Lyon. 10700. *By the Chairman*: What are you? Labourer.
- 14 May, 1906. 10701. Are you camped here at present? Yes.
10702. How long have you been here? I have been in this district since January—that is, round about here.
10703. You are out of employment? Yes.
10704. How long is it since you had any employment? As near as I can recollect, about six weeks.
10705. What was the last work you were doing? Chipping.
10706. Where? I was chipping at ———.
10707. What were you getting? You asked me a question and you ought to give me time to answer it. I forget the name of the man I was working for, but he is a neighbour of Mr. Draper's.
10708. What were you getting, as it is the wages we want to get at? I was engaged by the week. I got 35s. a week and had to find myself. I had to carry my own firewood on my back and build my own tent.
10709. What do you consider the value of a ration here? I left that work.
10710. That is not the question I asked you—I asked, What do you consider the value of a ration here? There is a little more that I would like to add to my former statement.
10711. But tell us the value of the rations, as it will come best here following the wages? I reckon it would cost 13s. a week to keep a man at the price victuals are.
10712. That left you 22s. a week for your wage? Yes; provided I worked a full week.
10713. How long did you retain that work? I retained it for three days.
10714. Do you care to say why you threw it up? Yes; because I did not think it was a fair wage.
10715. Since then you have been able to get no work? No.
10716. Is there anything else you want to tell us? The wet weather was stopped out of my wages. I was a weekly servant, and I do not think it fair that I should be put on by the week and paid by the day. So I left that job. The other men stopped there after me. I saw one of them in the street on Saturday night, and he said it cost him 14s. a week to live.
10717. You have not been up to the Mulgrave to try to get work? Yes; I have.
10718. And you did not succeed? I put in a tender at the mill.

D. Lyon.

14 May, 1906.

10719. For woodcutting? Yes.
10720. You did not get the contract? No.
10721. What was your tender? ———
10722. *By Mr. Paget:* Have the tenders been decided yet? I will not answer that. I will leave that out, as it is not compulsory to put that in.
10723. You do not want to say what you tendered? No.
10724. Have the tenders been decided yet? It was only by word of mouth.
10725. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything else? The Mulgrave mill have an advertisement in the paper for June.
10726. *By Mr. Nielson:* What is it about? Canecutting.
10727. It does not say anything about June in the paper? Yes, it does.
10728. I did not see it—How long has it been in? It is in last week's *Cairns Post*. It states that applications will be received for canecutting; but when you go to the mill, Mr. Davids, the manager, who advertised for the men, will not give you any definite answer. He was asked why he put the advertisement in the paper, and he said he had nothing to do with it.
10730. *By Mr. Paget:* Did you ask him that question yourself? No; but there was a party of fourteen there, and one of them asked the question.
10731. *By Mr. Nielson:* You were present when the question was asked? No. The men who went to the mill are all down there, but they will not come up here and give evidence.
10732. Why will they not come here? They do not seem to care to come up to the Commission. Some of them say they will be boycotted. Some of them are known and some are not, and they say that if they make a statement and it is put in the paper then they will be boycotted. They do not care about running that risk.
10733. *By the Chairman:* Are there many unemployed men about here? So far as I can recollect, I think there are between forty and fifty men scattered about.
10734. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many men are there about the town? There are about forty or fifty men round the town. Some of them have been employed here lately. Some of the men have been working at Hambleton mill, but they were knocked off and Chinamen put in their place. I spoke to these men, and asked them to come here and state their grievances, but they declined to come up. Of course, so far as I am concerned, I am not interested in the matter, and I do not know whether it requires their presence or not.
10735. Had you been about sugar districts before you came to Cairns? Yes; I have been about Mackay and different places.
10736. You have followed up sugar work in the last year? Yes.
10737. Can you give any idea as to what would be a reasonable rate of wages to induce men to follow up the work in the sugar industry in the slack season? The men I have been amongst seem to be satisfied with 25s. a week and found.
10738. And in the crushing season? They prefer contracts to cut the cane.
10739. *By the Chairman:* Suppose they had to take day wages, what would they want? They pay 8s. a day on the *Proserpine*.
10740. *By Mr. Paget:* For cutting and loading cane? Yes.
10741. *By Mr. Nielson:* And find themselves? Yes; it was on the mountain.
10742. Suppose you were put on wages during the crushing season what wages would you expect? I reckon no man should be offered less than 35s. a week. I would not take less than that to cut cane up here.
10743. *By Mr. Paget:* 35s. a week and found? Yes.
10744. How many hours' work a week? Well, of course, the hours that would suit one might not suit another man.
10745. But what is your opinion? I would not object to the hours they are working now, but I prefer less.
10746. *By the Chairman:* We do not know what hours they are working; what are they? Well, nine and a-half hours a day. Every farmer works different hours, but that is a recognised thing among farmers for white labour.
10747. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is there any prospect of the men you speak of getting work? They cannot get any at Hambleton or the Mulgrave; but their grievance is about the wages. The farmers down South get a lower bounty than the farmers up here, and yet the farther you come North the lower the wages seem to be. They do not treat them well, or give them any encouragement. No white man with any independence would put up with the treatment I met with at the Mulgrave. He would stop an hour off you.
10748. *By Mr. Paget:* Were you at the Hambleton mill when men were knocked off and Chinese engaged in their place? No; but those who were have told me about it, and I believe their statement to be correct.

REV. JOSEPH CAMPBELL, Archdeacon in the Church of England, examined:

10749. *By the Chairman:* What are you? Rector of Cairns, and Archdeacon in the Church of England.
10750. How long have you been stationed here? Two years and three months.
10751. Is that the only experience you have had in this part of the world? Yes; in North Queensland.
10752. Will you kindly give us your evidence in your own way? Might I be allowed to read a letter from the Bishop of Carpentaria, addressed to yourself?
10753. Yes, please?

Rev. J.
Campbell.

14 May, 1906.

Cairns, 10th May, 1906.

DEAR SIR,—As I am unable to remain in Cairns until the next sitting of your Commission, I should esteem it a favour if you would accept the following duly affirmed statement as evidence that I should have wished to give had I been able to attend.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

GILBERT WHITE, Bishop of Carpentaria.

R. A. Ranking, Esq., Chairman Sugar Inquiry Commission.

Statement by the Bishop of Carpentaria.

Rev. J.
Campbell.

14 May, 1906.

I have been resident north of Townsville for over twenty years, and have during that time seen much of the sugar districts, and had a good deal to do with South Sea Islanders.

I desire to testify strongly to the industry and general good conduct of a great majority of these men, especially of those who have come under Christian influences here or in their own country. Their conduct compares very favourably with that of the average white man, except when they have been supplied with drink, contrary to the law, and often by white men.

I do not wish to make any statement with regard to the return of those who have come to Queensland of late years. Whether wise or unwise, as a policy it seems to me to have no relation to any moral question, and I have no doubt that a large number of these "boys" desire to return to their islands.

I desire, however, to utter the most emphatic protest against the deportation against their will of those who have been a number of years—say, over ten, in the country, and who in most cases desire to stay in it.

Some of these men have been twenty or even thirty years in Queensland, and have lost the tickets and certificates which they originally received. Many of them are married, and have acquired land and property, and the great majority are respectable, hard-working men who have settled in the country with no idea that they would ever be dispossessed, and much to encourage them to a contrary belief. So late as 1902, after the passing of the present Act, I heard the late Hon. John Douglas assure a large gathering of South Sea Islanders at Thursday Island that those who had been a number of years in the country would not be interfered with. He said that this was not merely his private opinion, but an official statement which the boys might trust, and on which they might act. I have a memorandum of his exact words made at the time, and will forward a copy on my return to Thursday Island. I was myself in some doubt as to whether Mr. Douglas were not unduly sanguine in making such an unqualified statement, but those who heard him undoubtedly regarded it as a statement of the intentions of the Government, and it is at least interesting as showing that an honourable man like Mr. Douglas regarded it as absolutely inconceivable that such an action should be committed by the Commonwealth authorities.

It appears to me that to expel those islanders who have been permitted to settle for a number of years in this country, and who have conducted themselves without reproach would be an act of monstrous injustice such as no country could commit without serious danger to the national conscience, and without serious damage to the national reputation.

I would point out that the number of those who have been over ten years in the country cannot be very large, and that it is absurd to suppose that they can in any way be a menace to the country or interfere to any appreciable extent with labour conditions. I would point out that it would be easy to obtain through the Customs a list of those who have thus been resident, and that the number ought to be made public.

Any calculation based on the production of tickets is obviously unfair. It is very doubtful whether a white labourer would have preserved papers all these years, and it is absurd to expect that ignorant islanders should have preserved a paper to which they attached only a temporary value. All the old residents are well known locally, and the Customs officer would have no difficulty in verifying their claims by reference to trustworthy white citizens to whom they were known.

It follows, of course, that if the older residents are allowed to remain they should be allowed to work for hire. To allow them to remain and forbid them to earn their bread would be a trick and subterfuge unworthy of any Government. The number is so small that it can make no real economic difference; and to do a grave wrong merely to satisfy a passion for rigid uniformity is something like hanging a man who has been proved innocent on the grounds that a jury had found him guilty.

It is constantly said that the Government will not proceed to extremes in the cases above mentioned, but it is surely time that some authoritative statement were made to relieve the anxiety of the men themselves, and of those who are interested alike in them and in the maintenance of the national credit for justice and humanity.

I hereby affirm that the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

GILBERT WHITE, Bishop of Carpentaria.

Affirmed before me at Cairns this 10th day of May, 1906.

P. G. GRANT, P.M.

10754. Now, as regards your own evidence? I wish to say that I am a friend of no party, but the friend of all, and what I wish to say is without prejudice. I know that many have very strong feelings about our giving utterance to our opinions from the labour point of view; but I do not wish to say very much about that. I feel that there is room for all—that where a white man does a faithful day's work he has nothing to fear from kanaka labour. In India I think it is recognised that every white man can do as much as three of the coolies, and I have no doubt the same ratio obtains here. It is all a question of faithful work; but I do not want to enlarge upon that. I feel very strongly on behalf of these men in the same way that the bishop does. There are many of them who have little settlements and properties. I have heard of some who have saved money to the extent of £100, and they have a desire to remain in the country; and, if they have that desire, it seems to me it should be respected, and the time limit specified by the bishop appears to be a very sensible one. Those who have resided in Queensland for ten years might be allowed to stay if they wish. It cannot affect the labour conditions to any appreciable extent. I have taken great notice of these men since I have been here. Twenty-five years ago I went down to Norfolk Island, and studied the Melanesian Islanders settled there. I resided amongst them for some weeks for the express purpose of finding out how they were influenced by the Christian religion, and, as a rule, they are benefited to a very large extent. I occasionally converse with "boys" as I go to Hambledon and Nelson, as I am about a good deal. They have been educated by the missionaries, and really, when you get at their inner life and their inner feelings, you find that they are quite worthy of respect. I can put my hand upon some places where a different state of things obtains, and where they are apt to lead dissolute lives, if they are not actually doing so; but we know perfectly well that in those cases it is the fault of the whites. I know a place in the suburbs of this town where drink is continually being supplied to the kanakas, who gather from places all around, and I have reason

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to think that the relationships existing between them and some white women are not of a respectable character. Amongst those very people are kanakas, who occasionally come to my church, and who are as good men as you can find anywhere. They are religious in disposition and of high moral principles, and live simply to do what is right; but simply through force of circumstances they are compelled to take up more or less with these others. But I feel that if those who are respectable desire to remain here—either because they have acquired property or because they wish to live in a civilised place—they ought to have the privilege of so doing. I need not enlarge upon the difficulties which many of them would experience if they went back. Some of them are almost afraid to go back and mingle with the heathen. They would have very great difficulties and dangers to face—we know that very well from the experience of the missionaries. All things considered, I think considerable liberty ought to be allowed, and that each individual case ought to be considered on its merits, and that where there are respectable kanakas living amongst us for some time they ought to be allowed to stay. On the other hand, there are many of whom the country would be well rid, and they might be sent back to their islands to come under the influence of missionaries and teachers—which cannot, unfortunately, be accomplished here to a very great extent. We always find it very difficult indeed to get at these men. We have not the missionaries here, and when we parish priests go out we see the men idle. I have seen them myself. These men are drifting away, without any power to help them, and I think they would be very much better off in their own islands under the influence of school teachers, who are sent from the mission stations to instruct them. With regard to the children born in this country, I think it would be a manifest injustice to them to make them go. I feel that those who have been born here ought to be allowed to grow up, and continue in the surroundings in which they have been placed. Of course, they are not there through any fault of their own, and I think, in most cases, they desire to remain here. I think it would do a great injustice and harm to put these children amongst their own people on the islands. I feel very strongly about that.

10755. *By Mr. Paget:* Would you allow the children to stay here, and send their fathers and mothers back to their islands? No; I would not, indeed. I feel that cases like that ought to be dealt with individually, and ought to be allowed to remain. It would not affect the labour question very much if they remained here. I think our own people can hold their own with anyone in that respect.

10756. *By the Chairman:* If a scheme of that kind were adopted, then, in the aggregate, there would be a very large number of kanakas—male and female adults and children—What would be your idea on the subject of putting those persons on some special reserve of agricultural land, where they could form a separate colony on the lines of the aboriginal reserves? I have not given that any thought. At first sight it seems to me to be a very good suggestion; but I hardly think it is necessary. From a consideration of the rights of the white people, I do not think it is really necessary. You would be talking more of the kanakas themselves.

10757. I was talking of them and also the undesirability of an admixture of the races in the future? I think it would be a good idea, and one that would appeal to the islanders and satisfy them.

10758. The suggestion emanated from the kanakas themselves? Then that is more satisfactory.

10759. *By Mr. Paget:* Both at North Rockhampton and Proserpine there were islanders who have been a considerable number of years in the country, and are married and settled down who thought it would be a solution of the difficulty? It had not occurred to me.

10760. *By the Chairman:* On such a reserve, their moral and spiritual welfare could be attended to by your making arrangements to send teachers amongst them, and they would be a separate body altogether? Yes.

10761. Eventually they would die out, but that would be in years to come? Some of them have strong feelings about being sent back, and I respect those feelings, because I know the difficulties they have to contend with the moment they land. There is lots of land that could be brought under cultivation and improved by their labour without interfering in the slightest degree with our own people. It is a very happy suggestion.

10762. Is there any other subject on which you would like to address us? I do not know much about it yet, and I am simply gathering information myself.

10763. Have you any suggestion you would like to make as regards their deportation, and having in view the food supply on the islands? I do not know anything about that except in a casual way. We all know the habits of the islanders, and to import a large number of men into an island where the food supply is limited, and men who are used to a different class of food, would mean that discontent would immediately spring up and it would lead to fighting.

10764. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you visit the Atherton district? Only as archdeacon occasionally. I hear from the clergy there all about the work.

10765. I wanted to ask you if you were aware that there was a considerable number of islanders in the Atherton district? I do not think so.

10766. You have no mission there? No, nor have we here, sad to say. There is a Presbyterian mission near here, or rather, I believe it is undenominational.

10767. Is it connected with the Queensland Kanaka Mission? Yes.

10768. Miss Young is interested in it? Yes. Mr. Purdie conducts it at Nelson. I go out there at least once a month, and it always appeals to me when I go out there and see those "boys." They go back from their class to their homes conducting themselves, I may almost say, better than our own children do when they are going home from their Sunday school. I have been speaking to these "boys," and I find that they are worthy of our attention.

10769. There is a great deal of missionary work done in the Mackay and Bundaberg districts? Yes; they are centres of activity down there, and we ought to do more here.

10770. *By Mr. Nelson:* You say you agree with the bishop's letter, on the whole, but, as you advocate that every case should be dealt with separately, there is no occasion to fix a ten-year limit at all? No; I do not feel so strongly about that. You will find that somewhere about that time they have not got rooted in the soil and have not accumulated much property.

10771. The probabilities are, so far as I can judge from a moral or religious standpoint, that there is a better scope for mission work in the islands than there is here, because there are no contrary influences at work? Yes; I quite agree with you there. It goes to my heart to see the way some of them are living here. It was really at the request of the Bishop of North Queensland that I decided to come and say a few words.

KEESFREE, Native of Malayta Island, examined:

[Mr. Wilson, Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders, acted as interpreter.]

- Keesfree. 10772. *By Mr. Nielson*: How long have you been in Queensland? Thirteen years altogether. I went home once.
- 14 May, 1906. 10773. How long you stop at home? One month.
10774. How long ago was that? Eight years ago.
10775. *By the Chairman*: Why did you not stop at your island? I like to stop in Queensland and I come back to Queensland.
10776. Friend longa you want to fight you in your island? No, but I like to come back to Queensland.
10777. You work now? No; no work now.
10778. *By Mr. Nielson*: When you finish work? Seven weeks ago.
10779. *By the Chairman*: Have you got money? I drew out my money from the bank.
10780. You spend your money longa ki-ki? Yes.
10781. *By Mr. Nielson*: All your money finished? Yes.
10782. *By the Chairman*: Are you married? Yes.
10783. You married to island woman? No; I married an aboriginal woman.
10784. Have you any childreu? One boy, fifteen months old.
10785. *By Mr. Paget*: Were you married in church? No.
10786. *By the Chairman*: Where were you married? I go down to Inspector Durham, and I tell him I going to keep this woman, and I keep her.
10787. Another pick-ninny come up? No; only one.
10788. *By Mr. Nielson*: What you want to say to-day? I do not want to go home.
10789. Where you live now? I live here.
10790. You think you can get job? Yes.
10791. Where? Plenty work here. When I like to get a job, I can find it.
10792. You want to stop longa Queensland altogether? Yes. I sorry for the woman. I do not want to leave my wife here, but I frightened take her home.
10793. *By the Chairman*: Man Malayta kill her? I am frightened something like that.
10794. *By Mr. Nielson*: What name "passage"? Sinerango.
10795. That close to Uru? Yes.

HARRY DELAMO, Pacific Islander, examined:

- H. Delamo. 10796. *By the Chairman*: What island you belong to? Malayta.
- 14 May, 1906. 10797. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you married? Yes, to aboriginal woman.
10798. How many years have you been in Queensland? Twenty-two years.
10799. You been go home? I go home one time.
10800. *By Mr. Nielson*: How long ago? Long time ago; me no savee now. Me stop ship, and come back again.
10801. You too much fright? Yes.
10802. You man bush or man salt water? Me belong salt water.
10803. *By Mr. Paget*: You been married longa church? I married in court-house at Geraldton before Mr. Macarthur.
10804. *By the Chairman*: Have you got any children? No.
10805. Are you working just now? No; me walk about.
10806. *By Mr. Nielson*: You got money longa bank? A little bit.
10807. *By Mr. Paget*: You want to go home or to stop? I want stop altogether longa Queensland.
10808. *By the Chairman*: Suppose you go home and take your wife longa your island, you think other fellow kill her or steal her? My own man all right; but bush man might kill her. But if they kill herit does not matter. We both Christians, and go to God.

SOONA DABIE, Pacific Islander, examined:

- Soona Dabie. 10809. *By the Chairman*: What island you belong to? Malayta.
- 14 May, 1906. 10810. How long have you been in Queensland? Five years.
10811. Are you married? No.
10812. Are you a walk-about "boy"? Yes.
10813. How long? Six months.
10814. Have you got any money longa bank? No.
10815. *By Mr. Nielson*: Where you stop now? All about.
10816. Where you get "ki-ki"? Another man give it to me.
10817. Do you want to go home? No.
10818. Why? I got no money.
10819. Suppose you get passage, you go home? Yes.
10820. *By the Chairman*: Would you go without any money and without a box? No; I can't go with nothing.
10821. *By Mr. Nielson*: Suppose you go with no box, what name countryman talk longa island? Too much row longa me.
10822. You been look out for job? Yes.
10823. You find him? No.
10824. *By Mr. Wilson*: What name man he talk? He can't give me any.
10825. Why can he not give you any? He fright.
10826. Fright of what? Longa you fellow.
10827. What name he fright longa Government? You cost him too dear longa passage.
10828. Man he say "You take little job, no tell him Government"? He say, "You go to Government, and tell him send you to me."
10830. Some farmer say he give you job no sign agreement? No.
10831. *By Mr. Nielson*: Suppose ship come to Cairns, you go to island? No.
10832. Suppose you got box, you go home? Yes. Suppose me got money, me go all right.

EREROW, Pacific Islander, examined :

10833. *By the Chairman* : What island do you belong to ? Malayta.
 10834. How long have you been in Queensland ? Six years and four months.
 10835. Are you married ? No.
 10836. What are you doing now ? I walk about.
 10837. Have you got money in the bank ? No ; I lose my money.
 10838. *By Mr. Nielson* : Where you lose him ? Longa Herbert River and here.
 10839. How you lose him ? Lose him longa tucker.
 10840. You lose him longa cards or fan-tan longa Chinaman ? No.
 10841. *By the Chairman* : Do you want to go home longa island ? If I got money I go home ; but I got no money, so I can't go home.
 10842. *By Mr. Nielson* : Suppose you get passage, you go home ? Suppose me get passage, money, and box, and everything I want, I go home.
 10843. What name you want ? Tobacco, knives, axes, matches.
 10844. What more ? I think that is all.
 10845. You want saucepan longa cook ? Little fellow.
 10846. Bicycle too ? No.
 10847. Do you want tools ? Yes.

Ererow.

14 May, 1906.

QUIRAMOO, Native of Malayta, examined :

10848. *By Mr. Nielson* : How long you been in Queensland ? Two times.
 10849. How long first time ? Five years. Then I go home.
 10850. How long you stop home ? One year.
 10851. How long you been here this time ? Five years.
 10852. You belong to Fiu ? Yes.
 10853. You tell us altogether what sort of ground longa Fiu ? Good ground longa Fiu.
 10854. *By Mr. Paget* : Big fellow place ? Yes.
 10855. *By Mr. Nielson* : Bigger than Mulgrave ? Mulgrave smaller than Fiu.
 10856. Too much water stop longa Fiu ? No ; no water there. One big river there.
 10857. All the same as water here in Cairns ? Yes.
 10858. Fresh water ? Yes, fresh water and very deep. Steamers can come up that river.
 10859. Do steamers go up there ? Yes, little steamers.
 10860. "Boys" make a garden at Fiu ? Yes, plenty garden there.
 10861. They grow yams ? Yes, and taro and cocoanut.
 10862. Every "boy" got a garden longa Fiu ? Yes.
 10863. Plenty ki-ki there ? Yes.
 10864. Plenty ki-ki alonga bush, too ? Yes.
 10865. Suppose plenty "boy" go home at one time, then plenty ki-ki there ? Yes. Plenty tucker there. My father grow it for me.
 10866. Your father got a garden ? Yes.
 10867. You got no work in Queensland ? No.
 10868. What for you no go home ? I have got no money. I want to buy something to take home.
 10869. Suppose you get passage and box, you go home ? Yes.
 10870. What for you been lose your money ? I been eat 'em.
 10871. Plenty ship go home ? Yes ; but I stop.
 10872. Are you a missionary "boy" ? No.
 10873. You been lose your money alonga Chinaman ? Oh, yes.
 10874. Which way you live now ? In town.
 10875. Where you get 'em ki-ki ? Alonga Chinaman.
 10876. Chinaman give ki-ki for nothing ? No, another "boy" pay for my ki-ki.
 10877. Suppose ship come alonga Cairns, you go home ? No, me no go home. I have no money. What is the good of going home ? I have no money and no box.
 10878. If you go home, your countrymen make a row with you ? Yes, countrymen make a row alonga me if I have no box.

Quiramoo.

14 May, 1906.

TOMMY, a Native of Malayta, examined :

10879. *By Mr. Nielson* : How long have you been in Queensland ? Three years six months.
 10880. You only come to Queensland one time ? Yes ; only one time.
 10881. You Fiji before ? Yes.
 10882. Where you learn to talk English ? Here.
 10883. You talk English before you come here three years ago ? No.
 10884. You want to go home—you got money ? No. Suppose I go home will you buy me a box ?
 10884a. You work now ? No.
 10885. *By Mr. Wilson* : How long since you walked about ? Four weeks.
 10886. How much you get when you finish ? £14.
 10887. Which way you lose your money—gambling ? Yes.
 10888. You lose money alonga Chinaman ? No ; another "boy."
 10889. Which way you get 'em ki-ki now ? Another "boy" buy ki-ki for me.
 10890. What for you no go home ? I go home if you buy a box for me.
 10891. You go back and win some money and then you buy 'em box ? All right
 10892. You know Joe ? Yes.
 10893. He ride a wheely-wheely ? Yes.
 10894. You lose money to Joe ? No.
 10895. Suppose a ship come to Cairns, you go home ? Yes.

Tommy.

14 May, 1906.

(Geraldton.)

TUESDAY, 15 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.
 MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

JOHN DEMPSY SULLIVAN, Inspector of Pacific Islanders, examined:

- J.D.Sullivan. 10896. *By the Chairman:* Amongst your other duties you are Inspector of Pacific Islanders for the Geraldton district? Yes.
10897. How long have you been inspector? About five months.
10898. You are preparing a return giving the Commission information about the Pacific Islanders in the district? Yes.
10899. Have you heard any of the islanders express an opinion upon the question of their approaching deportation? Yes; the general view of the islanders is that they have got to go, and that is what is influencing the majority of them in their desire to go home.
10900. *By Mr. Paget:* Is that the view of the islanders who are married and settled down? No; they resent it. They feel that they have to go, but they look upon it as a hardship.
10901. They really do not desire to go? No, especially those married to aboriginal women.
10902. *By the Chairman:* Several of them are married to aboriginal natives of Queensland? Yes.
10903. Have any of them got families? Yes. I have not heard any complaints from islanders married to Polynesian women.
10904. Is there anything else you can tell us? Under the Act no agreement can be registered after 1st July.
10905. *By Mr. Paget:* That is under a regulation? Owing to the number of walk-about "boys" there will be after that date, some regulation ought to be made to enable them to be employed weekly.
10906. Are you not aware that that regulation has been rescinded? No.
10907. Have you not received any information about it? No.
10908. *By the Chairman:* You think it would be better if the "boys" were allowed to work for weekly wages until they can be deported? I think it will be necessary. Some of them are penniless. They are a great worry, as they are drawing £1 to £2 out of the Savings Bank every day, and it is only a matter of time till their funds become exhausted, and no doubt they will become an expense to the State in the end.
10909. Are you aware that the "boys" with money are rapidly spending it in maintaining themselves and others who have no money? That is so. Where they belong to the same village they assist each other financially.
10910. Are you also aware that the main objection many of the "boys" have to being deported is that they have spent their money and cannot earn any more; they are therefore unable to supply themselves with the "trade" which they generally take back to their islands, and they will not be welcome if they go back empty-handed? Yes; they always desire to have money with which to purchase presents to take back to their friends; and with the low wages now offered to them owing to the number of walk-about "boys," a great number of the old hands do not wish to sign on.
10911. *By Mr. Paget:* What wages are being offered? From 7s. 6d. to 10s. and found per week.
10912. What has been the ruling rate hitherto? From 10s. to 15s. a week—some 16s.
10913. Is there a Labour Bureau here? I am supposed to be the officer in charge of the bureau.
10914. Is it made use of by employers or employees? Not in the least. It is really very little use, as it is run in the outside districts, to either employer or employee. It is quite a formal matter to send in a return about the state of the labour market.
10915. Do you think from your experience that if a properly organised Labour Bureau were established here it would be made use of? Yes; I think it would be. I was going to mention that something like that will be necessary in connection with the white labour.
10916. *By the Chairman:* Is there any notice-board to show that this is a Labour Bureau? No; I have nothing to show that it is a Labour Bureau, except that I have been asked to send in a return.
10917. Have you any books in connection with the Labour Bureau? There is one. The only intimation that I have received was a general circular sent out to all clerks of petty sessions asking them to send in a return to the department, and stating that the return must be sent regularly in future.
10918. Do you know anything about the unemployed in this district? There are not a great number. I suppose there are about twenty or thirty.
10919. Do you issue relief? No; the sergeant has that entirely in his own hands. I was going to mention something about the deportation. There will be a good many "boys" about here in the early months of next year, as most of the agreements expire on the 31st of December; and unless some auxiliary ships help those now engaged in the labour trade many of these "boys" will be an expense on the State. I think the boys ought to be allowed to work weekly until the boats come. The labour boats could then start loading in the South, and fill up in the Northern ports.
10920. We are inclined to think that it would be better for some of the boats to start loading in the North and work South? Well, either way will do so long as boats call at all the ports. It is a great expense on the "boy" and also on the employer to have to pay for a passage to Bundaberg to get a boat there. There is £2 extra passage to be paid for the increased fare to the islands, and £2 10s. extra for the "boy" to go to Bundaberg. That cost is thrown on either the employer, the Government, or the islander.
10921. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think if a boat called at Port Douglas and all the Northern ports the kanakas would avail themselves of it to return home? Yes, as the islanders would then be able to go home without expense to themselves. This £2 10s. extra is a big item to the "boys" who have been spending their money and have only a few pounds left.
10922. *By the Chairman:* Could the labour boats come to this place? They generally lie off Lucinda Point.

10923. But could they not come up here? Yes; they could come right up the river.
10924. How far is it down to the anchorage? It is 6 miles down to the bay. They could anchor there, and then we have steam launches here which run up and down the river.
10925. Why should the "boys" pay their passage to Lucinda Point? The shipping companies have things too much their own way, and the expense is thrown on to the shoulders of the employers or the islanders.
10926. Would you favour a boat starting at Port Douglas to load, and then loading at Cairns and Geraldton? Yes; that would only be fair to the Government, the employers, and the islanders.

J. D. Sullivan.

15 May, 1906.

CHARLES WILLIAM MCGOWAN, Licensed Victualler and President of the Johnstone River Paragdee Central Sugar Mill Association, examined:

10927. *By the Chairman:* What is the evidence you wish to give? I wish to place the scheme of the association before you.
10928. *By Mr. Paget:* Is that a scheme for settling white workers on the land? Yes; I will give you a copy of it.
10929. *By the Chairman:* That is the part of your scheme which affects us. We are distributing 100 10-acre blocks for men to go on to in the off season. I will give you a map showing you where those blocks are.
10930. In connection with this mill that you are hoping to start, you propose to provide 100 10-acre blocks? Yes; on good average sugar land. They will be distributed all over the area which you see on the map. The surveyed portion represents 4,460 acres and the agricultural farms about 1,000 acres. The 100 10-acre blocks will be distributed all over those areas. We will distribute them in groups not larger than four. We do not intend to make villages of them. The terms on which we propose to dispose of the 10-acre blocks were originally a deposit of 10s., but the association decided to forego that 10s. altogether. Actual work in the district and making a living on the block establishes a man's right to that block.
10931. *By Mr. Nielson:* For how long? Until he pays for it in six, eight, or ten years.
10932. *By the Chairman:* At what price? £4 to £8 per acre. They will pay the cost of these blocks in annual payments out of their earnings from the mill company. We have agreed to allow the owners of the cane-cutter-blocks to elect one director to represent themselves.
10933. They will have representation on the directorate? We will allow them a director to themselves. That is a provision that will appeal to their good sense. The only condition is that they shall work in the district and reside in the district, and they can pay the cost of these blocks when and how they like.
10934. *By Mr. Paget:* Extending over what period? Ten years.
10935. *By the Chairman:* You have 400 applications lodged for these farms? Yes. That is the number of applications we received up till last April twelve months, when we handed the list to Mr. Kidston. We continue to get inquiries from all parts of Queensland.
10936. Will you read the paragraph in your scheme which refers to the applications? "Applications for those blocks now reach over 400, and a continual stream of applications and inquiries reach the association from all parts of Queensland for land in the mill area; so much so that the association have decided to allot extra twenty cane-cutters' blocks, and have made a definite offer of thirty labourers' blocks of 5 acres each to the Agricultural Bureau for distribution among workmen's families." In addition to that we have received further applications up till the 4th of the present month. There are also other blocks that I wish to draw your attention to.
10937. Do the shareholders in the proposed mill propose to give the land? Yes; we will sell the land. I can answer myself for sixty blocks. Then I hold an agency for 4,460 acres from the owners. I have a perfectly free hand to put in as many 10-acre blocks as I think advisable. There are others who are anxious to cut up their land into small areas. You can take these figures as absolutely correct—namely, that 318 farmers will grow cane, including the owners of the 100 10-acre blocks. The association has been in existence for eighteen months, and has done exhaustive work in getting statistics to verify its facts, so I am not drawing on my imagination in giving you these figures.
10938. You are a business man? Yes; I have been here for seven years.
10939. You have approached this from a business aspect? Entirely for the sake of the district.
10940. Your colleagues have no doubt that you can grow cane with white labour? We have not a scintilla of doubt about it. I have seen the white labour registered farms since February, 1903, and they are 100 per cent. better off now than they were that day.
10941. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you any experience in growing cane? I have always lived in cane-growing districts; but I have never been a grower.
10942. Are you of opinion that the industry can be carried on in this district under white labour conditions? I am only a resident in the town, but I have very good opportunities of noticing the progress of the farmers who have registered under white labour conditions. I am an auctioneer, and sell horses, and I have no difficulty in getting £20 or £25 for a horse from men who four years ago could not buy a horse for £5 without asking me as a favour to wait until the following Monday until they got a cheque from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.
10943. Your observation is that those who have availed themselves of the bonus provisions are better off financially than they were under the old conditions? Some of them are cent. per cent. better off.
10944. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you prepared to say whether those who have not registered under the white labour conditions are better or worse off than they were five years ago? I think they are better off. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company have paid very fair bonuses during the last two or three years. In 1904 they paid a bonus of 4s. 3d., or 4s. 3d. a ton, and last year they paid 3s. 0½d. per ton; 12s. a ton is their standard price.
10945. Why have the company been able to pay that bonus? The impression amongst business men is that it was necessary for the company to pay the bonus to bring the farmers as near as possible to the level of the white registered growers' bonus. Whether that is right or wrong I cannot say.
10946. But the white registered farmers also receive this bonus from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? But they never received it before 1903.
10947. For the reason that the price of sugar has been pounds better than it was before? I am diffident about expressing an opinion on the matter, because I am not a cane farmer.

C. W. McGowan.

15 May, 1906.

C. W. McEwan. 10918. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think that the continuance of the bonus is necessary in order to carry on the industry with white labour? I think it is.
 15 May, 1906. 10919. *By the Chairman*: Have you had opportunities of judging of the white labour that is available in the district? Sober, steady, young men left this district and took contracts on the Herbert River about six weeks ago because the farmers here were not prepared to enter into agreements with them at that time. A contractor came from the Herbert and formed a gang here.

DENIS CASEY, Sergeant of Police, examined:

D. Casey. 10950. *By the Chairman*: How long have you been stationed here? Nine years.
 15 May, 1906. 10951. Do you issue relief to unemployed travellers? I did until within the last six months.
 10952. Who does it now? It is not issued now. It has ceased except in cases of destitution.
 10953. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you had many cases of destitution during the last six months? Not that I consider destitution. I got some travellers whom I considered able to work for their rations.
 10954. *By the Chairman*: Can you give us any idea as to what unemployed white labour there is now in the district? There are a good few coming and going, but they do not apply for work. They come from Chillagoe, call here, and go away.
 10955. Do they appear to have money to spend when they come here? They are very often found in the lockup.
 10956. *By Mr. Paget*: What is your opinion of the class of floating white labour last year as compared with what it was some years ago? Some of them are very inferior, and as a whole they are no better than the men who came here some years ago.

JAMES ROBERT DOWNING, Cane Farmer, examined:

J. R. Downing. 10957. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am a cane farmer, under the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.
 15 May, 1906. 10958. What is the size of your holding? Latterly it is about 30 acres. I bought some last year.
 10959. How much did you cut last year? It is very hard to answer that question, because I had to pick some of the cane here and there, and leave some standing that was not fit to cut, because the white ants had eaten it underground.
 10960. How much are you cultivating now? About 46 acres. There are about 40 acres that I bought last year from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, thinking I could grow cane on it, but I am unable to do so, and I am going to let it go under grass.
 10961. Are you registered for the bonus? Yes.
 10962. Are you employing any white labourers? Yes.
 10963. What wages are you paying? £1 a week and found.
 10964. Have you found any difficulty in getting good men at those wages? I generally know the men, and I pick them.
 10965. Are they local men? No. One of them has been here about eighteen months or two years, and the other has been here about six months.
 10966. What wages are paid in the cutting season? There was one wages gang here last year, and they were paid 30s. a week and found. The others were all contract gangs.
 10967. Was there any difficulty in getting men at those wages? There was great difficulty at the latter end of the season.
 10968. Why? It was getting too hot. I saw one man offered 7s. a day and found, and he would not take it. That was just in the last few weeks.
 10969. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you been cane growing for many years? For eleven years.
 10970. How long have you been registered for white labour? Practically two years.
 10971. *By the Chairman*: Do you anticipate any trouble about getting white labour in the coming year? Well, yes. Of course we do not expect much trouble, because the Colonial Sugar Refining Company took it out of our hands. The company have promised to get the gangs to cut, and we have to give their prices. Of course the trouble is that if we do not accept their prices, we will have to do the best we can for ourselves.
 10972. Did the Colonial Sugar Refining Company send South for men? They held a meeting at Goondi last week, and it was decided that the company would cut the cane, but they would not trash it.
 10973. Have they sent South for men or have they their gangs engaged? I cannot tell you that.
 10974. They have undertaken to provide the white labour, and you will have to pay the price they charge? Yes.
 10975. *By Mr. Paget*: You will pay their contract price to white men? Yes. The price was placed before us, and we were satisfied with it.
 10976. *By the Chairman*: What are the prices that were fixed? So far as I can remember, it was 3s. tid. a ton for crops running from 14 or 15 tons up to 25 tons. Of course we shall have to pay that on account of the terms offered at the Mulgrave. There it is 5s. per ton for crops from 10 to 14 or 15 tons, and a bigger price for any tonnage less than that.
 10977. *By Mr. Paget*: That is a matter of special arrangement? Yes.
 10978. Those prices were paid for cane growing on flat country? No; they are the prices to be paid for the rising season.
 10979. Is it for cane on level country? Yes. We have no slinging on the hills here.
 10980. *By the Chairman*: Are there many men on comparatively small areas settled around here? Yes; the areas would be from 40 to 160 acres.
 10981. You heard the scheme for settling men on small areas of 10 acres each that was proposed in connection with this new mill? Yes, I heard that.
 10982. Do you think it is a good scheme? Yes, fairly good.
 10983. Do you think it will be fairly satisfactory as a means of settling men on the land? Yes, if the land is good agricultural country. If it is bad land it will not be suitable, because through the slack season a man will work on his own bit of land.
 10984. But you approve of the principle? Yes, thoroughly. I ought to know something about it, as I started here myself with 3d.

J. R.
Dowling.

15 May, 1906.

10985. On that principle? Yes. I had 46 acres of land, but I only had 3d. in cash.
10986. *By Mr. Paget:* You now own those 46 acres, and you have got 40 acres more? Yes.
10987. *By the Chairman:* How long has that taken you? Ten years.
10988. And what man has done man may do? Where there is a will there is a way.
10989. You do not know much about the kanakas? I have employed all colours—Chinamen, kanakas, Malays, and Hindoos.
10990. Have you considered the question of the deportation of kanakas? Yes.
10991. What do you think is the best way to get these men off to their islands without doing them an injustice? Well, I really think each "boy" has money enough to go back on his own. The majority of them have been here from ten to twenty years, and most of them have bank accounts.
10992. *By Mr. Nielson:* But you know that there is no regular service of steamers to the islands like there is on the coast? I know that. There is no back loading.
10993. No; not now? The ship that takes "boys" to the islands will get none coming back, and it does not pay them to make the trips now.
10994. *By the Chairman:* The question is—Will there be a shortage in the supply of food there if you send a great number of "boys" back at the one time? We fought this question from start to finish, and we failed, and I consider it is the place of the Federal Government to settle it now.
10995. How are you going to get the "boys" on to their islands—Will there be a danger of the "boys" starving where there is no food? I have made inquiries from various "boys" about their state of living in the islands when they go home, and they tell me that in Malaya newly-landed "boys" get killed and eaten. They are round the camp fire at night telling yarns, and they get struck from behind with a club. The Solomon Island "boys" say that about the Malaya "boys," and the Malaya "boys" say that is what the Solomon islanders do. Being a farmer under the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, and an employer of white labour for the last two years, I think I am justified in giving evidence on that aspect. This year I commenced cane trashing, and I put on two men at £1 a week each. We trashed about 64 chains a day with our hands, and not with hooks. We got through nearly half an acre a day.
10996. *By Mr. Paget:* What was the cost? The contract price is £1 an acre.
10997. What are you doing it for? Somewhere about 1s.
10998. Are you having any difficulty in keeping the men at those wages and that description of work? No. When I treat them properly they are well pleased. They would sooner work for £1 a week and be well treated than be paid £1 an acre, because they would have to go home and tucker themselves. They would sooner take less wages and get found. I also know two other men who were trashing on a crop running about 18 tons to the acre. With respect to the workers, there are men who will work and men who will not work, and I would like to say a few words about them. There is no need to cater for any unemployed here. There is plenty of work, such as it is, for everyone to do from this day till next January. Last year I had three gangs of white men—one wages gang and two contract gangs.
10999. Employed by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? No; by the farmers. I found there were some men who, although they had the name of being habitual drunkards, stuck to the gang from one end of the season to the other. The majority of them did not have a drink at all until they had no work to do.
11000. Until the work was finished? Yes. I have known some of these men for the last fifteen years, and they never leave their employment unless they are forced to do so by a bad master. Some men leave their work because their tucker is not good enough, and they go on the drunk.
11001. How many men were there in each gang? One gang varied from fourteen to twenty-five; another gang varied from nine to fourteen; and another gang had about ten. There were supposed to be ten in the small gang. The men in the small gang lost very little time. They were good men and picked men. The most they lost was about a day a man all through the season.
11002. Were they wages or contract men? Contract men.
11003. What about the other gangs? With the wages men there was no trouble. One of the farmers who cut with that gang told me about a fortnight ago that he would cut in the same way this year in preference to cutting with contract men. The wages men were practically cheaper than contract men. Every man should cut 2 tons a day in fair cane if he is supplied with trucks. There is no trouble in doing that in a 15 to 18 ton crop of clean cane.
11004. You do not anticipate any difficulty in connection with the supply of white labour in the future? There will not be sufficient. Of course, last year there were only a few white gangs, as only a few farmers were registered; but in the future they will all be registered. If the Colonial Sugar Refining Company do not take it up there will not be sufficient labour in the district.
11005. *By Mr. Nielson:* Could not the farmers combine and do what the Colonial Sugar Refining Company are doing, and send south if they think sufficient labour will not be forthcoming? The Colonial Sugar Refining Company took action first. The farmers combined last year and engaged three gangs.
11006. *By Mr. Paget:* Were the men housed in tents as they moved about from farm to farm? One or two might have had tents; but, as a rule, they lived in houses.
11007. The farmers had sufficient accommodation for them? Yes.
11008. After this year there will be a considerably greater number of white men required than are required this year? Yes.
11009. Do you anticipate any difficulty in obtaining the greater number of men? Yes; especially if the Cloncurry railway and other lines are gone on with.
11010. Can you give us any idea as to how this deficiency may be supplied? There is a section in the Immigration Restriction Act that I would like to see repealed.
11011. Which section is that? The contract section.
11012. Are you not aware that an amending Act was passed in the last session of the Federal Parliament which enables you to engage European labour under contract, provided you first satisfy the Minister charged with the administration of the Act that such labour is not obtainable within the Commonwealth? I was not aware of that.
11013. If the labour is not obtainable within the Commonwealth, the Minister may issue a permit? I did not know that.
11014. It is your opinion that it will be necessary to supply the deficiency by immigration? Yes.
11015. The farmers or their association have not yet made up their minds to find out whether there is sufficient labour in the Commonwealth? No. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company brought forward their proposal, and the farmers are depending upon that proposal.

J. R.
Downing.
15 May, 1906.

11016. *By Mr. Nielson*: What are the details of the proposal the company have made? They have offered to bring men from the South.
11017. At the prices you have mentioned? Yes.
11018. Who is to pay the passage-money? The Colonial Sugar Refining Company find the money.
11019. Do they charge you with it? Yes.
11020. *By Mr. Paget*: Do not the men return the passage money when they have earned it? It was suggested that we should pay the passages here, and that, if they remained right through the season, we should allow them those passages, but that they should pay their own fares back if they wished to go.
11021. That is a further payment in addition to the contract prices you mentioned? Yes. It comes to about 2d. a ton to us.
11022. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you agreed to allow 2d. a ton to be deducted on account of the passage money? Yes.
11023. How many men do the company propose to bring up? I could not tell you exactly.
11024. How many are required? I reckon we will need 200 in addition to the men already here.
11025. *By Mr. Paget*: The farmers, as a body, are quite satisfied to leave the arrangements with regard to the supply of white labour in the hands of the company for this year? Yes.
11026. *By Mr. Nielson*: What quantity of registered cane do you think there will be this year? I think there will be something over 40,000 tons.
11027. *By Mr. Paget*: That will amount to about 200 tons per man for the season? Yes. In fair crops they should do 3 tons a day. There were three gangs here last year. I was not cutting at the time, but I came in on several occasions to get men to do some planting and I could not find one. I think that if our crushing season was shorter we would get a better price for our cane.
11028. And that would enable you to pay better wages? Yes; we would have a better density.
11029. But is it possible for the seasons to be so altered by any human agency? I do not think it altogether rests with the seasons. At the beginning of the season the mill breaks down for two or three days, and in another week or two it breaks down again.
11030. Are not such accidents inseparable from heavy crushing? It looks very strange that there is very seldom a breakdown at the latter end of the season. The mill should be as good at the beginning of a season as when it finished up the preceding year. When the mill breaks down it puts the farmers back a lot.
11031. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you know if there are any agreements made with local men for the coming season? Not that I am aware of. The crushing will not start until June, and large numbers of men are to be brought from the South for this season, and for this season only.
11032. There are some local men to be obtained? There are a good few men walking about here.
11033. So far as you know, they have not arranged for any contracts? Not unless they have done it since last Wednesday.
11034. *By Mr. Paget*: I suppose there are not a large number of residents who can cut and load? There were a few farmers' sons last season who went into the wages gang I spoke of.
11035. You rely upon the floating population for your labour? Yes. So far as I could see, the floating population did very well last year. If there was anything wrong, it was not exactly their fault. Of course, there are a few who will not work at all.

JOHANN THOMAS, Cane Farmer, examined:

J. Thomas.
15 May, 1906.

11036. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am a farmer under the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.
11037. What is the area of your farm? 50 acres.
11038. Are you registered for the bonus? Yes, for this year.
11039. What did you cut last year? About 40 acres.
11040. What tonnage of cane did you get off? 393 tons.
11041. Was that cut by casual labour or did the Colonial Sugar Refining Company find the labour? It was all black labour.
11042. *By Mr. Paget*: Were they found by the company? No, by myself.
11043. *By the Chairman*: Where will you get the labour to cut your cane next year? I have applied to the company to cut the cane this year.
11044. They will find you with the labour and charge you with the cost? I have to do the trashing, and find the labour for that. The company's cutters only cut the cane and lay the rails in the paddock. I have to lay the rest of the rails myself.
11045. Are you employing men at farming work? Yes.
11046. What wages do you pay? £1 a week and found.
11047. Have you any difficulty in getting men at that rate? This year three white men came and asked me for a job, and I gave them work.
11048. Is labour scarcer than it was before? I never had any white man come and ask me for a job before these three came.
11049. Then more men are asking for work this year? Yes; three came.
11050. How long did they work? One man worked three days, and I sacked him as he did not earn his tucker. The second man just about earned his tucker. The third man I had a week, and he earned about one-third wages.
11051. That was the last of them? Yes; I let him go. In fact, he went himself.
11052. Are you employing anyone now? I have two men, one trashing on contract and one on wages.
11053. How long have you had them? I have had one for a week. He is a farmer's boy, and he is all right. He went with his father to German New Guinea, but he came back again. He worked with his uncle for a while, and then he came to me and asked me for a job, I gave him a job, and I intend to keep him.
11054. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you interested in this Johnstone River scheme that was placed before the Commission by Mr. McGowan? Not at all.
11055. *By the Chairman*: Do you think it would be a good thing to give working men small farms, to enable them to settle on the land? I do not think so. I have had fourteen years' experience on the Johnstone River, and I do not think it is any good to give a man 10 acres, because it is not enough to live on and it is too much to starve on.

11056. But he might go out and work somewhere else? But he could not go out and work, and work on his farm too. J. Thomas.
11057. Could he not go to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and say, "I have 7 or 8 acres that want cleaning up. Will you send a gang down to clean it?" 3 or 4 acres would be sufficient for a man if he has a family and is going out to work as well. A good man can always get work here. He would be recommended by one farmer to another, and he would get work from one place to the other. 15 May, 1906.
11058. What vegetables could he grow up here—Could he grow sweet potatoes and pumpkins? Yes.
11059. Do you ever grow pumpkins? Sometimes, but not always. We cannot get the seed for English potatoes, and we can only grow one crop.
11060. They grow well? Yes, sometimes, and sometimes they fail.

JOHN FLETCHER HARDING, Cano Farmer, examined:

11061. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer. I was sugar-farming in the South for many years, and I am about to take it up here now. I represent the Johnstone Shire Council. J. F. Harding.
11062. Where did you grow sugar in the South? I was first of all mill manager for Davey and Gooding, at Beenleigh, then I served two years with Gibson Brothers, at Clydesdale, and then I was with Arthur Robinson, at Helensvale. 15 May, 1906.
11063. On what subject do you wish to speak? Some few years ago the shire council undertook to construct a tramway under the Local Works Loans Act to open up the country from here to the Seventeen-mile, with the object of obtaining more settlement and bringing in revenue to the council as well. At that time the "White Australia" cry was *non est*, and federation was only in the air; and the idea was that there would be a lot of settlement up the line. The shire council's experience as to the supply of labour was that during the construction of the tramline, about five years ago, good reliable labour was unobtainable in sufficient numbers. The widely advertised wages were 8s. per day for pick and shovel, and 9s. per day for axemen (line clearers), and sleeper choppers, labour only, 1s. per sleeper, 5 feet by 10 inches by 5 inches. The council required 200 men to finish the job in the dry months, but could only procure about forty hands, few of whom saw the job through owing to their wandering habits and inefficiency at the work in hand. Both the sleeper contractor and the clearing contractor failed to carry out their undertakings, largely owing to the lack of steady, competent men. As the line was built by day labour, a considerable sum was disbursed as wages (from £25,000 to £30,000) in the district; yet, excepting residents and a few others, no money was invested, the storekeepers not being paid, too often, while drunkenness was rife. The council's permanent staff brought out the contrast in strong relief between the nomad and the genuine worker during construction. I reckon the value of the latter was as three to one compared with the former. The effect on the shire council's finances of the attempt to supercede coloured labour by white labour has been bad. When the line was in course of construction two different schemes were started to erect large sugar-mills. That these were *bona fide* I can vouch, as I was interested in both. Had those mills been able to go on, the council would have had 90,000 tons of cane and 10,000 tons of sugar go over the line, worth as freight £4,500 to £5,000 per annum to the council. The inward freight to supply the settlers and mills would also have been a nice sum. The line runs through agricultural country, and at the terminus are miles of fertile tropical jungle awaiting development. After the tramline became a certainty, settlement and selection began apace, and some clearings were made by intending cotton and coffee growers. I also had a number of inquiries from intending settlers, and spent at different times, at my own expense, several weeks showing southern friends the land available for selection. With the advent of a change of conditions, everything in the shape of settlement ceased, and what had started was abandoned, seven or eight selectors' families leaving the Commonwealth. The council has had to heavily reduce values in many cases, and in others to seize the timber on properties along the line for rates. It has also had to reduce the salaries and wages of employees; and would have but a small amount of freight indeed but for the banana industry, which is carried on solely by Chinese growers, who employ Chinese labour. Had this change of conditions not intervened, most of the land now leased and worked by Chinamen would have had white farmers, employing kanakas, as occupiers now, growing sugar. One small new industry that started was arrowroot growing and manufacturing. For five or six years about 50 tons of this product have gone over the line per annum as freight, at 7s. 6d. per ton. As ordinary tropical labour is necessary for the successful exploiting of this business, it will cease this year. What the district wants is white immigrants (British or German). Land for them, available in blacks, according to quality, of from 160 acres to 360 acres, allowing each head of a family or adult male selector the right to employ twelve to twenty agricultural labourers, to be obtained from British India through Government agency, with restriction to agriculture. As an alternative, the district wants a very large bonus on white-grown cotton, rice, coffee, arrowroot, and the importation to this country of white labourers, though I fear this would fail owing to climatic conditions. If the first suggestion were carried into effect, a large white population and trade would ensue. Should the second be carried into effect I am very doubtful of success, except in a few isolated cases. If nothing is done, the country will remain vacant, undeveloped, and must take the consequences.
11064. *By Mr. Nielson:* Your grievance is that your tramline is not paying? Under present conditions it is paying, thanks to nobody else but the Chinamen.
11065. But it is not paying in a financial sense? It is paying at the present time.
11066. You are behind in your interest and redemption payments? Yes, to a certain extent.
11067. Then you have not met your liabilities? Not up to date.
11068. *By Mr. Paget:* To what extent is your interest on the tramway in arrears? About £6,000, speaking without the books.
11069. What is the amount of your annual payments of interest and redemption? The clerk has been ill for several weeks, and there is a lot of information I have not been able to get.
11070. What was the amount of the loan? £49,000 for forty years, and something like five years are gone.
11071. You are paying something like £5.1 per cent. per annum as interest and redemption? I thought the payments were 5 per cent. on account of interest and 2½ per cent. redemption. It comes to 7 per cent. or 7½ per cent. per annum on the amount of the loan.

J. F. Harding. 11072. No; it is £5 1 per cent. per annum? I have not the Act before me.

11073. *By Mr. Nielson*: No doubt the views you express are correct, but they hardly come within the scope of this inquiry, which is, first of all, how to carry out the law regarding the deportation of the kanakas. And, secondly, to inquire as to the availability of white men to take their places in the sugar industry? I thought it also included inquiries into how the thing was working in actual practice, and how it affected various financial concerns, such as shire councils.

11074. It does not affect us whether your tramline pays or whether it does not pay—that is a speculation the shire council went into, and, unfortunately for the council, it has not turned out well—Our inquiries are confined to the sugar industry? But the fact remains that, if the tramline had been left alone, it would have been a paying concern.

11075. *By the Chairman*: You are not a believer in the possibility of substituting white labour successfully for black labour? I would not say so.

11076. You think so? No one can say so yet.

11077. You do not think it is likely to be successful? It is too early to give a definite opinion on it.

11078. What you say is that your council employed white labour and found it unsatisfactory in the past? Yes; and it was more congenial work than sugar-growing.

11079. And you do not think it is likely to succeed in future? The council view the matter with very much concern.

11080. You do not think the white labourer can thrive here when he is a married man, because the conditions are adverse to the rearing of white children? Yes; they are.

11081. In that respect you speak as a married man and the father of a family? Yes; I have got three children at home, and I take observations at first hand.

11082. *By Mr. Nielson*: We have had evidence from working men who say that cane-cutting and the harvesting of cane generally is much lighter work than navvying or timber-hauling—that is the evidence of men who have tried both? Since I have been here I have cut cane alongside kanakas, and loaded cane alongside them, and made the pace for both. I know something about axe work. I have been bullock punching and timber-getting, and I have been at every job that comes within the line of bushmen in this country, and I say that no man will tackle cane-cutting or hoe work or trashing if he can get a job at sleeper-cutting, shifting mullock, or horse-and-draw work. Cane-cutting is the dead finish of a man looking for a job, and so is trashing and hoe work.

11083. *By the Chairman*: How do you account for the fact that farmers' sons are leaving New South Wales and signing on in large numbers to come up here? I am very glad to hear it, but it is very probable when they get here and find there is something softer to do they will get out of cane-cutting and do the softer job. They will go mining or do anything else rather than cut cane. No one wants to see a white population settled in the North more than I do, because I do not want to have to spend a musket to defend 4,000 miles of coast line on my own.

11084. Do you think it would be an inducement for white labour to come here if they had homesteads to settle on? I think it would if it was the proper class of labour.

11085. Do you not think that by holding out an inducement to settle on the land you would discover the proper class of labour? It would do no harm to try it, and it might do a great deal of good. I think if the bonus is continued and the proper class of labour is forthcoming, such as farmers' sons, men who are ready to work for a day's pay, we shall be able to carry it on, but if there is no bonus, and we have to offer white men kanakas' wages then I do not think the white men will tackle it.

11086. You think the bonus is necessary to protect the industry? Either the bonus or a duty of some kind.

11087. It is a question of wages? It is a question of reliable men as well. It is no use giving a man 15 "bob" a day if he only stops with you a day, and then goes "on the burst" in the middle of the crushing.

11088. Do you think temperance is a great factor in bringing about the reliability of labour? It is 99 per cent. of the whole thing. There is a great deal of temptation attached to it, because a man may be living for a month or two cooking for himself, and he comes into town and sees the lights, and the barmaids, and the goodfellowship, and he starts spending his money; and when it is all gone he is kicked out.

11089. Would it not be better to consider the bodily comfort of the labourers to encourage them to stop in the district and keep sober? Yes, so long as it does not make the cost run into so much that it does not pay the employer to have a labourer. It pays an employer to look after his labour just the same as to look after his horse or bullock.

11090. *By Mr. Nielson*: That is quite right, but many of them do not realise that? I know they do not, and that is where half the row comes in.

ALFRED BOOX, Storekeeper and Labour Agent, examined:

A. Boox. 11091. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A storekeeper and labour agent.

11092. Do you keep a registry office? I have not a regular registry office, but I send a great many men out to the farmers.

11093. On what point do you wish to address us? A great many men who are sent out complain that the fields are not kept sufficiently clean; consequently they are not able to make enough money at trashing. They are all trashing now.

11094. *By Mr. Paget*: That is at the contract price of £1 per acre? Yes. On the other hand, some other men are doing fairly well at £1 an acre on other farms.

11095. *By the Chairman*: It all depends the way the field is kept? Yes.

11096. Have you many applications to send out men at the present time? I could send out men at the present moment. There is no occasion for men to be out of work at the present time. I can send men out trashing at £1 an acre, and some at 22s 6d.

11098. Do you find plenty of men available for the purpose? No; not plenty.

11099. Are there many men about that will not take that class of work? No. If all the farmers had on their full complement of workmen there would not be enough men to do it. The men go out to farms and find dirty cane, and they come in here again hoping that they will be able to get trashing to do somewhere else.

15 May, 1906.

11100. You think it is a *bonâ fide* complaint that owing to the dirty cane they cannot earn enough? A. Beon.
 Yes.
11101. Are there any idle men about at the present time? No. If there are they have just come in 15 May, 1906.
 from another camp.
11102. *By Mr. Paget*: I suppose a lot of men pass through this district on their way to the mining centres? When O.K. and the other mines shut down owing to the rain large numbers of men passed through this way, but now that the mines have started again that has stopped, and not many come this way, as they have started work again.
11103. *By the Chairman*: How long have you lived up here? Since 1896.
11104. Have you been occupied as you are now? No; I have been at pretty well everything. I have done ploughing, cane-cutting, sleeper-cutting, and all kinds of work.
11105. And you found yourself able to do it? Yes; I had no trouble.
11106. Have you formed any opinion at all about settling men on the land and keeping their labour here? The class of men you see going round looking for wages will not settle down, and will not take any risk. If you offer them £1 a week they will take it, but if you offer them anything where they may make £3 at the end of the year, they will not touch it.
11107. Do you think it is possible to attract men from the South and the other States who will settle down here as farmers? If the circumstances remain as they are at present, and you give them good land, but more than 10-acre blocks, then you might attract them.
11108. What areas do you suggest? They want 25 acres at least.
11109. What do you mean when you say, "If the circumstances remain as they are at present"? I mean the bonus and one thing and another. Anything less than 25 acres is no good to them or anyone else. The wages gangs working here last year consisted mostly of the farmers themselves and their sons. They had a few knockabout men, too; but if they had depended upon them altogether they would never have got through. The farmers and their sons were used to the work, and could put through half as much again as another man. The strange men complained that they could not keep up with the farmers and their sons.
11110. Do you know if the Goondi farmers are doing anything to get labour? No.
11111. Are you aware that the Mossman and Mulgrave mills have signed on several gangs? I saw it in the paper. Miners and that sort of men are not much good to you here. You can never get miners to work on top at agricultural work. If you put these men on the ground with the sun on them in summer time, they cannot stand it, as they have been working underground all their lives.
11112. The miners can earn more underground than they can on top? At Charters Towers there are hundreds of underground miners out of work, and they have written to me telling me to tell the farmers they will be here for the crushing.
11113. Do you know if they are underground men? Yes, a good many of them.
11114. I think they are mostly men who work on top? There are not so many working underground now.

ROBERT LEE, Selector and Fisherman, examined:

11115. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am anything at all. I am a selector and a fisherman. R. Lee.
11116. Do you live here? I have lived here for four years. 15 May, 1906.
11117. On what subject do you wish to speak? As a farmer, with a big family of boys, I would like to say that my boys are prepared to take anything they can earn a fair wage at. The trouble I see in this district is the unclean cane. The clean cane seems to be all snapped up before anyone knows anything about it; but no one wants the unclean cane, because they cannot make wages out of it. It is so over-run with weeds that when you are trashing you do not know what you are doing.
11118. *By Mr. Nielson*: The individual farmer has it largely in his own hands whether he will get the trashing done at a reasonable price or not? If he will clean it he will get it done for £1, but if it is not clean it is worth more money.
11119. *By the Chairman*: It is not a question of scarcity of labour? I cannot see that it is. I have a big family who are prepared to do anything they can get to earn a fair wage out of.
11120. How old is your eldest son? Twenty-seven, and the others are twenty-two, twenty, and eighteen. They were brought up on a farm near Townsville, but they have to go fishing for a livelihood now as they cannot get work while the kanaka is here, and I cannot get any land to grow sugar on.
11121. Did you try? I tried the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.
11122. Did you try the Government? I took up some Government land, but I could not get a road to it. I paid three years' rent, but they would not give me a surveyed road to it.
11123. Have you got the land now? No, I have thrown it up.
11124. *By Mr. Nielson*: I think I saw your name, or your son's name, on the list of applicants for 10-acre blocks in connection with this new mill scheme? Yes.
11125. Do you think if the farmers adopted a similar scheme of letting out 10-acre blocks it would greatly assist the industry? Yes. It would settle a lot of people on the country who would have an interest here. At the present time they have no interest. There will be no trouble to get sufficient white labour in the State to carry on the sugar industry in the North.
11126. *By the Chairman*: I suppose you know a lot of these men flitting about as described as being an undesirable class of labour, because they will not keep sober? I admit that. But there are plenty of sober men, too. I have worked in the country for twenty-two years, and I have a fair idea of it.

(Geraldton.)

WEDNESDAY, 16 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*)

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

LEONARD CECIL HORTON, Cane Farmer, examined:

L. C. Horton, 11127. *By the Chairman:* You are a cane-grower? Yes.

11128. What is the area of your holding? Approximately, 120 acres, 100 acres of which are under 16 May, 1906. cane.

11129. What did you cut last year? 1,500 tons from 100 acres.

11130. Did you cut with white or black labour? With white labour.

11131. By day labour or contract? Contract.

11132. At what price per ton? 6s. a ton was the contract price for the whole job. That included trashing, cutting, loading, laying rails, and hauling out.

11133. Did you employ casual labour or had you a gang? It was a gang composed of casual labourers.

11134. Did you ever hear what wages they made? Some of the men told me they were making 9s. a day with me, but they cut for a second grower and they were unfortunate with him as they were rushed in order to get through before the mill closed.

11135. *By Mr. Paget:* Were they working on the co-operative principle? Yes.11136. *By the Chairman:* Have you made any arrangements for this year? No definite arrangements. We have a proposal from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company to manage the cutting this year, but we have not definitely accepted it, although I expect we shall do so.

11137. Have you any objection to saying what the offer is? The offer of the company is to harvest the cane for those growers who may so desire at a contract rate of 3s. 6d. to 5s. a ton on crops of 10 tons and over, with a bonus of 10 per cent. added for those who go through the season, the company to have the management of the work, the farmers to be responsible for the payment, through the company.

11138. *By Mr. Paget:* Is the labourer to be refunded the cost of his passage money to Geraldton if he goes through the whole season? That is a matter which has not yet been decided. It was left by the Growers' Association in the hands of the company, and we have not heard anything definite from them yet.

11139. You are not aware whether the company are going to employ southern or local labour? I believe the company's intention is to absorb all the local labour that is likely to be serviceable, and then to fill any vacancies from wherever they can get the labour.

11140. *By the Chairman:* I see you have some notes; if you read them we can question you upon them? The chief point I wish to impress upon the members of this Royal Commission is: The absolute necessity for the Federal Parliament, immediately it meets, to so amend the Immigration Restriction Act as to permit of the introduction of the right class of labour from the continent of Europe and other countries where such may be available "under contract," untrammelled with impracticable restrictions, to take the place of the South Sea Islanders, whom it purports deporting at the end of this year. To urge, for one moment, that there are sufficient men of the class required at present in Australia, who are able, and also willing, to satisfactorily take the place of the islanders about to be deported, is folly; and for the planters to rely upon any such assumption is only to invite—when matters are put to the test—a crash, which must inevitably occur. To successfully carry on the sugar industry, the planters must have "reliable labour," and the right class of labour is the only one that is likely to prove reliable. The nomadic labour with which the planters (who had registered as "white growers" previous to this year) have managed to carry on so far, somehow or other, will not be worth considering now that such a large proportion of the planters have registered. It is very difficult, and, judging from Press statements, apparently sometimes impossible, for the uninitiated to realise that too much stress cannot be laid upon the fact that the labour the planters have must be of the "right class" that is "suitable"; and by that I mean it should be of the "agricultural class." It is imperative in discussing this very important—and it is undeniably very important to the planters, the State, and the Commonwealth—question of available suitable labour, that we should bear in mind that though a man may be not only a good man, but even an expert, at the particular work for which he has been trained, and at which he is experienced, if he should unfortunately be out of employment in his own line, it does not necessarily follow that he would be worth employing at all in the canefields; and this applies even more particularly since the adoption of a "standard wage," which will undoubtedly prove a hardship to many men who are not what may be styled "absolutely physically fit," and yet are not old or decrepit, who may have been employed in the canefields under the old conditions on a mutually satisfactory basis. And this is another factor which will shorten the available labour supply. It must also be borne in mind that even if there were sufficient unemployed and others in Australia (which I maintain there are not) willing to fill the vacancies in the canefields, on giving the work a trial, many of these would prove unsuitable (and here I speak from absolute experience and from carefully kept data, and not from hearsay or guesswork) for some of the necessary work; and many would promptly state—of which I have also had very considerable experience—that the work was unsuited to them, and they would leave it and you at that without the slightest reference as to what sort of a quagmire they left you in. During one season I had eighty men through my books to keep up a working strength of twenty. This is a state of affairs that has to be strenuously guarded against, and a very much better one immediately provided for. The only possible way I can see in which this difficulty can be met as a whole is by importing sufficient white field workers to take the place of those about to be deported, and also of those who, though able, are not willing to do the work. Again, it is not logical for a man to think he can undertake what is to him totally new work, and probably work in the sun instead of in the shade, to which so many who make the new attempt have been accustomed, and make the same wages at, or get the same returns—if contract—right away from that work as one who is an expert. The assumption is an absurdity, and yet it is what so many expect, and when they are—as they inevitably are—more or

less disappointed, they throw the work up in disgust without having given the same a fair trial, L. C. Horton, and blame anyone or anything for the results, which are generally attributable to their want of experience. This is the class of labour which at present is more or less available for the planters, 16 May, 1906. at any rate in this district, and is what may be termed "eminently unsuitable." There are, of course, exceptions, and sometimes the planters are fortunate enough to secure them, but I speak of the great majority; and again, I reiterate, I speak from experience. It may, perhaps, be contended by some that when the South Sea Islanders arrive as newchums they have no experience. Precisely; but this has no bearing on the question, because they are willing to be apprentices, and learn, and, whilst learning, receive an apprentice wage, which maintains a balance. But the average white worker, who is often unsuitable at that, professes to imagine that he requires no apprenticeship to the new work, evidently considering he has sufficient genius to take the place of the same, and expects to get full returns from the beginning; or he expects to serve his apprenticeship at his employer's expense—a proceeding which the small margin of profit that is left to the planters at the present time (owing to the price they receive for their cane) will certainly not permit. One thing is certain: Labourers, to be "suitable," must be reliable; and, to be justly called "reliable," must be steady and sober—at any rate, must be sober until they have fulfilled their contracts; or, if on wages, have carried out the work in hand required by their employer; and, failing a sufficient supply of labour of this description, the planters must revert to alien labour. Failing a sufficient supply of that, the industry must and will perish. I never contended from the first that white men *could* not do the work in the cane fields. On the contrary, they have proved that they can do it; but I always did and still contend that a great many of them at present available *will not* do the work; and, so far, many who have taken up the work have accepted it purely as a "stopgap," and as soon as they had a little money coming to them have collected it, and gone elsewhere to seek what they considered more congenial work, leaving the planters to fill their places as best they could, or do without, if unable to fill them, and suffer the resulting loss. A great deal of this hinges upon the fact that many of those who tried were not suitable for the work. One other thing is a foregone conclusion, and that is it will be imperative that the bonus on white-grown sugar be extended for a very considerably longer time than is at present proposed. It must be extended until the period of unrest which at present obtains has completely passed, or the result is very easy to foretell, and needs no mention. At the present price most of the growers are paid for their cane, it is impossible to offer higher wages than have been set forth in the "District Standard Wages Statement," and it yet remains to be seen (and there exists a very grave element of doubt about the same) whether the growers will be able to continue to pay those standard wages right through, and still carry on successfully, and by "successfully" I mean with just a fair margin of profit after paying their way. Moreover, as it is practically impossible for the planters to find work for a large majority of the field hands all the year round, on account of there being of necessity a slack season in cane-growing, which exists after the harvesting is over, and the crop has been ratooned and cleaned, until the cane is again ready to trash, an average period of, say, three months in the year, therefore I consider it behoves the State Government to take immediate steps to secure, where they do not already possess suitable land, and allot the same, say, in 12-acre blocks (on terms which those who desired to obtain them could meet) to field workers who may elect to settle on them, and profitably utilise the slack season by making use of, say, 10 out of their 12 acres for cane-growing in a small way on their own account; and these settlers would thus, by a necessary stipulation in their land agreement, be ready to proceed with the work on the larger areas when required. That the contract system is most satisfactory to employers and workers there can be no doubt, and it will undoubtedly be adopted whenever possible, which, fortunately, it generally is. One innovation that the planters should forthwith adopt is that of references. The sole reason that so many planters have been, and still are, wedded to coloured labour is on account of its reliability, and because, after paying the necessary wages, there still existed a moderate margin for the planter, as his work was done when he required it, and he did not suffer loss through his inability to get satisfactory labour at the time he urgently needed it. In conclusion, I again emphasise the urgent necessity that exists for the amendment, at the earliest possible moment, of the Immigration Restriction Act, so as to permit of the introduction of labour from Europe, &c., under a contract which shall be practicable; and also the necessity for the State Government to make immediate provision for settling on homestead blocks in the sugar and other districts those sugar-workers who may desire to avail themselves of the opportunity so offered.

11141. *By Mr. Nielson:* In what direction do you want the Immigration Act amended? To permit of the introduction of labour from Europe. I understand that at present you are able to indent immigrants, but you are so trammelled by impracticable restrictions that the permission, where afforded, is really useless.

11142. Have you ever attempted to make use of the provisions of the Act? No; for the simple reason that I do not think anyone attempts to negotiate a fence that he knows is too big for him.

11143. Have you seen the Act at all? Yes.

11144. What is the restriction to which you object? You have to satisfy the Minister on so many points that it makes it unworkable.

11145. You have only to satisfy the Minister that you cannot procure the labour you require? That is your view of the matter, but it is not my view or the view of the planters in general in this district.

11146. It would only cost you a 2d. stamp to discover whether that view is correct or not? We have a pretty shrewd idea as to what his reply would be, without asking for it in black and white. We must have the labour at the time we want it, without having to waste time in making the necessary affidavits. There is no necessity for the business to be surrounded by so many restrictions.

11147. You have had since December to make an attempt, and in five months the whole matter could surely have been settled? That is a matter of opinion. It requires organisation, and organisation is not brought about in a day. It is a matter of evolution, and five months is a very small matter compared with the number of months that are occupied by the Government in dealing with things.

11148. You say that white labour has proved unsuitable, because in most cases work in the sun is new to them—Do you think that the persons you intend to bring from Europe will be experienced in that matter? They will not be very much affected, because they are accustomed to working in the open air.

11149. You think you will get men from the old country who will be experienced straight off the reel? We shall get agricultural labourers if we go to the right place for them, and not miners, engineers, and clerks, as some of our workers have been in the past.

L. C. Horton. 11150. Do you mean to tell me that you have had many miners, or were they only men who said they were miners? I think they held a claim to the accuracy of their statements. I will admit that they were the most satisfactory men we had, although they complained of the length of the hours. They were used to eight hours and did not appreciate a longer day than that, although they were not as tired at the end of the day as the others.

11151. Had they been underground miners? Yes.

11152. You say that white men have proved that they can do the work? It does not admit of argument, as I have done the work with them; but whether I have done it under satisfactory conditions is a different thing. They can do the work if they choose, and I have never contended otherwise.

11153. You say that the State Government should procure suitable land? Yes: it would be a very good way of expending some of their money.

11154. Do you not think it would be a good thing if the persons who own the estates, and grow cane on only a part of them, should cut them up into 12-acre blocks? But have you any legal machinery which will compel them to do so?

11155. No; but there is such a thing as necessity? Which does not always exist.

11156. Well, if it does not exist, there is no occasion for the Government to step in at all? I cannot agree with you. Because a private person possesses land, and there is no machinery to cause him to open it up to settlement, that is not to say that the Government should not take action to make him do so.

11157. *By the Chairmen:* Who is it that wants the labour provided now? The planters.

11158. Should the planter not help himself? He may not be in a financial position to do it. The possibilities are that he is not.

11159. *By Mr. Nielson:* To cut up a 12-acre block? Do you mean to purchase an estate to cut it up into blocks?

11160. If he is a planter he will have an estate already? Yes; but then the planters in this district have more or less small areas, and they have not got sufficient land for themselves. They would be unable to part with any and still have a living quantity of land. That is the trouble even with the largest grower here.

11161. But in this district there are any amount of plantations on which only a percentage of the area is actually cultivated? A certain percentage is in fallow. You have to spell your land occasionally.

11162. I include that in the cultivation? The land that is cleared at present is made use of and there is very little left out.

11163. Does not the Colonial Sugar Refining Company send round word to various growers of cane to shorten their areas? No; you have evidently been misinformed. Our new agreements with the company which will be signed shortly contain a suggestion that instead of cultivating 75 per cent. of our sugar area as we have been doing in the past we should reduce it to 60 per cent. It was considered that if the grower only grew 60 per cent. he could leave portion of his land in fallow and be able to cultivate a better crop and at less expense, and it would be to the interests of both the mill and ourselves to do it. That is an agricultural matter which must certainly be left in the hands of an agricultural expert.

11164. Would it not in many cases pay to set aside part of that 60 per cent. for labourers? Not if you want to pay your bills at the end of the year, and we want a fair margin for profit. It would be absolutely impossible to do it in nine cases out of ten, because we have not sufficient land. I have not, at any rate. Where you have big estates like Kipple Creek, the conditions are different, but I am speaking of the Johnstone River district.

11165. You say you want to have a fair margin of profit; that is quite correct, but I would like to know what you think a fair margin for profit? I do not know. Suppose I put the question the other way and ask you what you consider a fair income.

11166. Anything I can get is a fair income; but what do you consider is a fair margin for profit? You want to be able to pay your way and have something you can credit yourself with as a stipend at the end of the year.

11167. But I mean in the ordinary way of business what percentage do you fix for profit? That depends entirely upon your turnover. That is what makes it an almost impossible question to answer.

11168. *By Mr. Paget:* And on agricultural operations you consider you should have something to go upon to meet bad seasons? Yes.

11169. I am speaking as a practical farmer? You must do it from that view. If you are not practical farmers you must pass out of this industry.

11170. *By Mr. Nielson:* But you must have an idea what is a fair enough margin of profit? I cannot say that I have, because I never worked it out.

11171. You know what your price cost you, and what capital you invested in it? Yes.

11172. You know what your working expenses are? No; I cannot tell that until the end of the year.

11173. Not approximately? No; I cannot even tell you approximately.

11174. Why cannot you tell us what your working expenses are? We have only one payment a year, and it is difficult to tell. My working expenses may be £500, and the returns from my crop may be estimated at £1,500. But in six weeks' time the grubs may eat up all the crop, and I will still have to pay my expenses. Until you have harvested you never know what it has cost you.

11175. *By Mr. Paget:* The agriculturist never knows what his crop will bring until he has reaped it? He knows what his expenses are.

11176. *By Mr. Nielson:* You say most of the honest men are looking for work? Some of them.

11177. You said most of them were looking for work, and some of them were looking for beer? No; some of them.

11178. Do you prefer the contract system of working? Yes.

11179. Does it matter to you if a man is a "ringer" at cutting or only a fair hand, if the work is done on contract? It matters a great deal even if it is contract work.

11180. In what way? That is the trouble in discussing this matter before the uninitiated, for this reason—if one man is hanging back on the field, because he does not choose to work sufficiently hard, it affects the gang just as one bad potato affects the whole bag if you leave it there. If one man hangs back the others will see it, and they will notice that he is not doing as much work as they, while he is getting the same money. In that way it affects the gang, and in fact it demoralises them.

11181. How will it affect them if it is piecework? It is co-operative work. It is all done as a L. C. Horton. co-operative contract, and it is the only method of doing it.

11182. It is, perhaps, the only method you heard of? It is the only method that is practicable under existing conditions. 16 May, 1906.

11183. With regard to finding work in the slack season, do you get your cane cultivated right through the slack season? Yes, when the weather will permit. You have to take into consideration that the excessive wet weather we get here makes it impossible to go on the land, and I have been unable to procure the necessary labour to do it.

11184. What are the wages here? £1 a week and rations. That is what I have paid. I think it applies pretty generally; but until lately there have been only a few white growers in this district. The majority have registered for this year.

11185. And are the men generally satisfied to take that in this district? Yes, I think so. In the slack season they are very often glad of the opportunity to get that work. I am quite sure they are satisfied with it.

11186. Is that a rate which you think the industry can afford to pay in the slack season? It remains to be seen. A great deal depends on the season—whether it is a favourable one or an adverse one. You have to meet your expenses, and you have to see how things turn out. If it is a bad season, you lose by it.

11187. *By Mr. Paget:* But under the existing conditions, and with the bonus? Yes; the industry can afford to pay it under present conditions.

11188. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you ever grown cane with kanakas? I have.

11189. Did you find that the kanakas were all of equal ability? I found very little difference in them. I always employ "boys" from the one island, principally Malaya "boys."

11190. And re-engaged "boys"? Yes; I never employ newchums.

11191. You got someone else to break them in? Yes; but they got them at a breaking-in price. I believe the labourer is worthy of his hire and I pay more.

11192. And you think they should be skilled straight off the reel? I say you cannot get men skilled at the work at first, easy as it may seem.

11193. *By Mr. Paget:* With respect to the question of approaching the Federal Minister for permission to introduce immigrants, would it not have been necessary for your association here, or a body of farmers, to hold a meeting and make arrangements to secure the immigrants? Our idea was to organise and send a practical grower home to Europe to organise the labour.

11194. To act as your agent? Yes. But it is not good enough to do that until we get permission to bring out the labour. Getting the Minister's permission is the first thing, and sending home the agent is the second thing.

11195. Well, this amended Act has been in force for five months, but have you had time to make arrangements and discuss matters fully? Do you mean did we discuss it to make up our minds what is necessary?

11196. Yes? Well, we have made up our minds. I think I pretty well express the views of the farmers in this district. This matter has been brought up and partly dealt with at our association meetings here, and we have a petition drawn up at the present time, which we intend to present to the Federal Prime Minister, praying that the Act may be so amended. We are also petitioning the State Premier to assist us in the matter. We are only waiting for Parliament to meet to present it.

11197. And how does your association propose that the passage money should be paid for these agreements? That is a matter we have not gone into yet, but I think we shall approach the company to assist us in that matter. They assisted us with regard to the importation of South Sea Islanders, and, I think, if we approach them on matters that they are interested in as well as the planters, that they will assist us.

11198. Then it is practically the intention of your association to pay the passages of the immigrants whom you propose to introduce? I suppose so, in cases where it is necessary. In many cases immigrants would rather pay their own fares, and remain independent agents.

11199. I suppose you are aware that very few of such immigrants are coming to this country at the present time? Precisely. None of the Pacific Islanders came here under such conditions.

11200. We are speaking of European immigrants? We shall have to follow very similar lines to those followed in regard to the Pacific Islanders. Both classes are unprovided with money.

11201. I suppose you are aware that under the State system you can nominate immigrants by paying £4 per head; but they must be friends of your own? I have gone into that pretty thoroughly. That system would only supply us with a very small proportion of the labour we require.

11202. Are the farmers as a body prepared to try the new system of growing cane with white labour, making use, first, of the local labour, and resorting to immigration, if that provides an insufficient supply? I think that the aim and object of every grower in the district is to give any local labour the first opportunity. Of course if local men prove unsuitable, we must endeavour to make a change. Our contention is that there is not anything like sufficient labour available.

11203. *By Mr. Nielson:* For the crushing season? Yes.

11204. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you speaking more especially with respect to the present year, or to the future, when the industry may be deprived of 5,000 or 6,000 Pacific Islanders? We have very great doubts whether we shall be able to get sufficient labour for the present season. It is almost impossible to say until we have tried; but I think that next year the difficulty will be intensified.

11205. In the interests of your own business, you are prepared to give white labour a fair trial? Most decidedly.

11206. *By Mr. Nielson:* You have been registered for some time? Yes.

11207. Have your association discussed the question of immigration with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? Yes. The discussion was rather informal, but the company quite agree with us that it will be necessary to import some labour, and they suggest the South of Europe as the best place to get it from.

11208. How do you propose to employ any labour you may import during the slack season? That will be one of the difficulties that has to be met with, and it is a matter in which we look to the Government to assist the industry. I presume the Government are prepared to take some responsibility in connection

J. C. Horton with an industry so important as the sugar industry, and that they are prepared to give some practical assistance in the process of evolution from black to white labour.

16 May, 1906. 11209. But you have not discussed what you are to do with the labour that you import under agreement during the slack season? That is a matter which can be arranged on a business basis. If they want to remain here all the year round, the scale of wages all the year round should be readjusted that, in common fairness to the worker and the employer, it will cover the slack season.

11210. *By Mr. Paget*: Would it not be advisable for each farmer to have a minimum number of these men, and make up with local labour during the crushing season? That is our idea in suggesting settlement.

11211. If you required seven men in the crushing season, and only three men in the off season, is it your idea to indent the whole seven men? No. You would probably only want to indent four men.

11212. You would utilise them for the whole year? Yes.

11213. And make up your requirements from the nomad labour? Yes.

11214. *By Mr. Nielson*: What wages would you be prepared to pay those men all the year round? That is a matter that I have not worked out, and so I am not prepared to commit myself.

11215. When you make an application to the Federal Minister you will want to have it worked out? I realise that.

11216. *By the Chairman*: Have your association considered the question of those who have a surplusage of land selling or allotting certain portions for close settlement in areas of 10 or 20 acres? There is not a single grower in the district who has a sufficiently large area to be able to do that.

11217. Some of the persons who are associated with the projected mill have agreed to do it? They have big estates. There are only two big estates now—Mourilyan, over the river, which I believe belongs to the Union Bank, and Innisfail, which is also across the river. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company had a large estate, but they have lately realised that it was absolutely necessary to subdivide it, and they have practically sold or let the whole of this estate in small areas of from 80 to 100 acres.

11218. *By Mr. Paget*: They started to do that fifteen years ago? No; they started to distribute some of the outside areas at a considerable distance from the plantation; but up till this year they worked all the land surrounding the mill. I think that now they are practically cultivating no land themselves.

11219. *By the Chairman*: Is it not a fact that a great deal of the land in this district, as well as elsewhere, is held for speculative purposes? Undoubtedly.

11220. Cannot your association bring some pressure to bear upon those persons to sell some of their land? No; we have tried. We know that the land is held for speculative purposes, and with the present legal machinery we cannot do anything.

11221. Cannot you bring any moral pressure to bear upon them? I think that was exhausted long ago. Their trouble about moral pressure is very small. Their idea is to make as many dollars as they can out of the land.

11222. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you any method to suggest for getting them to cut up their land other than that it should be purchased by the Government? I cannot say; but the Government seem to be about the only people who have both the money and the power to do it.

11223. *By the Chairman*: Do you regard it as an injustice to the industry that land should be held in this way? I do. It is the only possible way that I see in which we can have people available for work all the year round. Of course there is work on some plantations all the year round, but not on the great majority.

11224. In that case, would you favour such action as might have the effect of inclining the owners of these large estates to part with their properties? Most decidedly.

11225. *By Mr. Paget*: Would you mind saying what kind of action you refer to? I cannot reply to an abstract question like that. It should be reasonable and workable action; if it were unreasonable or impracticable, there would be no use in attempting to support it. When you ask for my opinion, you must first submit your idea.

11226. Is there any method you can suggest, besides the repurchase of the lands by the Government under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, by which the owners can be induced to part with them? Yes. Central mills can be erected in suitable places. That is so palpable that I really did not think it required stating.

11227. *By Mr. Nielson*: And put another £2 or £3 an acre on to the price of the land? You might be better able to afford another £3 or £4 an acre if you had a chance of getting a good crop, and of disposing of it, than you would be able to afford 5s. an acre for the land at the present time, when the land is useless to you.

11228. *By Mr. Paget*: At present the lands you speak of are too distant from any existing mill to grow cane profitably? Yes.

11229. And, if the land were not too far distant, the existing mills could not take any more cane? No. They are running to their full capacity.

11230. *By the Chairman*: Are you sure that in all cases the land that is held against the public is too far from existing mills? Not in all cases. The exceptions only prove the rule.

11231. *By Mr. Paget*: Is it or is it not a fact that the existing mills are running to their full capacity? As far as I am able to give an opinion, they are absolutely running to their full capacity.

11232. Then those lands are not available for the purpose of growing cane for the mills? I have already said so.

11233. *By the Chairman*: But they would be available for the settlement of labourers who might be employed in the cane-fields—I was not suggesting that the land should be used for the purpose of growing cane? I presume they would be available for that purpose; but if a man has a homestead block the only crop he can grow here is cane. The only other profitable crop that can be grown on the Johnstone River is bananas, and they can only be profitably grown by the Chinese.

11234. *By Mr. Paget*: Has the growth of bananas been tried by white men? Yes, and it resulted in failure in every instance.

11235. Do you know what labour those white growers employed? That I am unable to say, although I believe in some instances Chinese and Pacific Islanders worked for them, and I have seen Japanese employed by them.

REV. CHARLES WARREN TOMKINS, Clergyman of the Church of England, examined :

11236. *By the Chairman* : Are you in charge of this parish ? Yes.
 11237. On what subject do you wish to address us ? My evidence concerns the Melanesian labourers.
 11238. Have you a mission here ? We have.
 11239. I presume you are the head of it ? Yes.
 11240. Will you kindly state what you came to say to us ? I just wish to state that the number of "boys" with whom I have come in contact in my mission work here have been considerably influenced by Christian teaching. They have reached a level of social and moral life which is higher than that to which they were accustomed in their native islands. In the case of these "boys" of whom I speak, to return them to their own homes in their own islands would involve, in some cases, hardship, and perhaps, in rare cases, active hostility and danger. I would respectfully suggest that the Government allow the "boys" that are being deported to return to islands of the Polynesian group other than the ones from which they came, if they so desire it.
 11241. *By Mr. Nielson* : They do it now and it has been done for years ? I would just like to say that about seven months ago I was asked by some of the "boys" here, who spoke in a representative capacity, to write to the Bishop of Melanesia asking him if he could come with the mission steamer "Southern Cross" to take them home, as they were afraid the Government would set them down on islands which were uncongenial to those who were Christians, as they would be islands where there were no missions or schools.
 11242. *By Mr. Paget* : That is even if they belonged to those islands originally ? Yes. Bishop Wilson replied that this was impossible, but he would do what he could to have their desires acceded to in some other way. I think the majority of my "boys" would go back to their own homes.
 11243. Do they belong to the Solomons or the New Hebrides ? We have a few Solomon Island "boys"; but most of the "boys" of my mission belong to the New Hebrides.
 11244. And there are a great many mission stations there ? Yes; and all the "boys" who wish to go back to their own homes belong to places where there are missions and schools.
 11245. Have you any Malayta "boys" attending your missions ? Yes.
 11246. There are now a few mission stations at Malayta ? Yes; I have four Malayta "boys," and those four would be willing to go back to their own island.
 11247. *By the Chairman* : How many "boys" are there connected with the mission ? 120.
 11248. Are they regular attendants at your schools ? The average attendance is seventy or eighty. In connection with this subject I may say that I have seen all the "boys" at the mission individually.
 11249. Are any of the "boys" married ? Yes; a good many of them.

Rev. C. W.
Tomkins.

16 May, 1906.

JOHN MATTHEW MALONE, Tobacconist and Labour Agent, examined :

11250. *By the Chairman* : You appear as the representative of the Workers' Political Organisation ? J. M. Malone.
 Yes.
 11251. What are you ? I have got a tobacconist business here and a labour agency and registry office.
 11252. On what subject do you wish to be heard ? On behalf of the Workers' Political Organisation I wish to speak about the application. I have had for men for the cane fields. I have only had four applications from farmers for labour in the last three months.
 11253. What do you deduce from that ? I could not get work for the men that are here.
 11254. Have you many men registered with you for employment ? A lot apply there for work, but I cannot send them to any place. They have been coming to me at the rate of twenty a week.
 11255. At the present time, what is the state of the labour market ? I have got plenty of men if there is plenty of work for them to do.
 11256. Are there many men available now ? About fifty or sixty.
 11257. About the town ? Yes; great numbers of them.
 11258. *By Mr. Paget* : You were able to fill the applications from these four employers promptly ? Yes. I could have supplied them with from fifteen to twenty men a week.
 11259. *By Mr. Nielson* : Are the men generally satisfied to take the rates of wages that are offering in this district ? They cannot help it, as they have to get work. They take whatever is offering to get a living.
 11260. What is the usual rate of wages offering in the slack season ? £1 a week is what I generally see them paying. It is only three or four months since I started in this business, but I have been here for six years.
 11261. Is there any difficulty for farmers to get men for £1 a week and found in the slack season ? Not the least. They can get them at any time.
 11262. Is there a Sugar Workers' Union here ? Yes.
 11263. Have they representatives here ? Yes.

16 May, 1906.

DUNCAN SHERRINGTON, General Worker, examined :

11264. *By the Chairman* : You appear here as the representative of the Sugar Workers' Union ? Yes.
 11265. What are you ? I am a general worker.
 11266. Are you in employment at present ? Yes.
 11267. *By Mr. Paget* : What are you working at ? Threshing cane.
 11268. *By the Chairman* : By contract ? Yes.
 11269. What are you getting ? £1 an acre.
 11270. Have you ever done that work before ? Yes.
 11271. And you are satisfied so far as you have gone in this particular contract ? From a monetary point of view I am quite satisfied.
 11272. On what subject do you wish to be heard ? I wish to make a statement regarding what I have seen during the two years I have been in the district.
 11273. *By Mr. Paget* : You have been two years in employment in the cane fields here ? Yes.

D.
Sherrington.

16 May, 1906.

- D. Sherrington.
16 May, 1906.
11274. *By the Chairman:* What do you wish to say? This year in particular the farmers and growers are talking very strongly that labour is not to be had. Even since March last the amount of labour that has passed through here has been something enormous. That labour could have been all employed if there had been an early start made in the cane-fields to do what we are doing now.
11275. If trashing had been started all the labour would have been absorbed? Yes.
11276. Has not the season been against it, and has it not been too wet to get on the land? The wetter the trash is the better it is for the trasher.
11277. You think the labour might have been absorbed to a great extent? Yes; a great deal of it. In reference to canecutting, our farmers have got the idea into their heads that a certain class of men are required to cut cane. I do not agree with that, as any man can become a canecutter who has got the heart and is willing to work. With regard to monetary matters, taking into consideration the prices given here lately and the usage the men have had from the employers—well, they are not conducive to encouraging labour.
11278. What prices have been ruling for cutting cane? The first year the average was 3s. 3d. per ton for cutting and loading.
11279. What was the ruling price last season? From 3s. 6d. to 4s.
11280. *By Mr. Paget:* Coming down to bedrock, what wages can a man make at those prices? At the end of our year's work, after the supplies of our gang had been paid for, our percentage returned, and our time totted up, it averaged something like 28s. 6d. a week.
11281. Exclusive of keep? Yes.
11282. *By the Chairman:* For the time you were actually working? Yes.
11283. What do you consider the value of a ration up here? The canecutters have to be well fed, as it is very hard work, and the men have to leave their camps at 5 o'clock in the morning.
11284. They have five meals a day? Yes. They generally live pretty well, and the average rate would be about 14s. a week, at any rate.
11285. *By Mr. Paget:* Does that include the cost of cooking? Yes. As regards the amount of money that canecutters make during the season in these districts, it cannot in any way compare with what men can make on the Northern Rivers of New South Wales.
11286. *By the Chairman:* Have you worked there? Yes; I have been working in the sugar for years. In New South Wales the Colonial Sugar Refining Company send out gangs, which are distributed in various places on the rivers. During the time I worked there I never finished a season with less than £38, while I ran up as high as £68 for my twenty-one weeks.
11287. How does the weight of the crops here compare with that of the crops in New South Wales? I have cut as bad cane in N. W. South Wales as I have ever seen on the Johnstone River. There are plenty of good crops here, but, unfortunately, very few white men have a chance of cutting them, as they are not regarded.
11288. *By Mr. Paget:* How do the prices paid here for contract work compare with the prices paid on the Northern Rivers? The last year I was on the rivers the Colonial Sugar Refining Company paid 2s. 3d. a ton and 6d. a ton bonus to men who worked through the whole season. They supplied the men with rations, cooking utensils, tents, and everything requisite for the gang. There is no man on the Johnstone River who earns the equivalent of that at 4s. a ton.
11289. *By the Chairman:* That is what you say you are going to get this year? I hear the company have taken over the gangs, but I have not heard definitely what prices they are going to pay.
11290. You told us the price now was 3s. 6d. to 4s. a ton? That was last year—for cane which was worth 6s. a ton to cut. If the company take over the gangs, it will make the prospects for labour better than they have been hitherto. We have quite enough labour in the country to carry on the industry without bringing more men into it. There is plenty of unemployed labour in the West that would be only too glad to come to these districts, provided inducements were held out to them; but labourers have never been encouraged in the two years I have been here.
11291. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you not think the conditions in the West are improving so much that a great number of the men you speak of are being absorbed in the pastoral industry? In the West there are about six men seeking work as rousabouts for every one who can find employment.
11292. *By the Chairman:* But is that the state of affairs now? I came from the West two years ago.
11293. But the conditions have altered during the last two years? The conditions cannot alter, because the dams are all made, the bres are all down, and the fencing is all done, and men are walking about three-fourths of the year looking for work.
11294. *By Mr. Paget:* Fortunately the conditions have greatly improved owing to the increase in the number of sheep by 6,000,000 or 7,000,000 during the past three years, and shearing and sugar work practically come on during the same months? Exactly. I am speaking from that point of view, too. I am not talking of the drought-stricken country, but of the years before the drought when everything was flourishing. If you went to a shearing-sheet, you would find about five times as many men as there was work for.
11295. You think that those men have not been absorbed in other avenues of employment? A good many came to the sugar districts when the bonus was first given, and the treatment they received was such that the tales they took back to the West frightened hundreds of men from coming to the sugar districts.
11296. *By the Chairman:* Do you think that if the requirements of the sugar districts were made known in the West, it would have the effect of inducing men to come here? There are thousands of men who have come here from the West this year.
11297. *By Mr. Paget:* Only work is not available at the present moment? Yes; they are prepared to work here when the harvesting starts.
11298. Can you suggest any means by which the condition of those men might be improved? Yes. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company want firewood; and the men could be employed during the slack season in cutting firewood, provided they could make a living wage.
- 11298A. *By the Chairman:* Have the Colonial Sugar Refining Company got all their wood for the present year? Yes.
11299. Does it not deteriorate a great deal if it is kept for a number of months? Firewood has been cut this year. A white gang was formed for the purpose of giving it a trial. Twenty per cent was to be deducted from the money they earned; but, unfortunately, the men were not able to complete their

contract, as they were not able to make a living wage. We wrote to Mr. Foster about the matter, and he very handsomely gave us half the percentage deducted, and he practically told us that if we had kept on there would have been no deduction at all. In all my agreements with the company, I have always found them very good to the workers. I worked under the company for many years on the Northern Rivers.

D.
Sherrington.
16 May, 1906.

11300. *By the Chairman:* What other work could be done here during the slack season? There is plenty of chipping and trashing, and a good ploughman can get work nearly at any time. At present the trashing is far behind.

11301. What can you make at 20s. an acre? In some places you can make a fair day's wage. I suppose I am working at present for 5s. or 6s. a day.

11302. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you arranged for any cutting contracts during the coming season? No.
11303. Have you endeavoured to get any? No; I do not take the gangs on myself, but I understand there have been very few applications for contracts so far.

11304. Applications by whom? By the men who generally take the contracts. There is a fairly well understood arrangement that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company are going to take over the cutting, and that they will form their own gangs.

11305. *By Mr. Paget:* They will not necessarily form their gangs with men from the South, they will try first of all to make arrangements with men already in the district, including yourself? Certainly; Mr. Barclay says that all local labour will have the first chance.

11306. *By the Chairman:* Why have not the men applied to be signed on? They have. Some of the gangers have been talking to Mr. Barclay, who is getting the gangs, but I have heard nothing about the formation of local gangs yet.

11307. *By Mr. Paget:* I suppose the officers of the company have hardly had time to form the gangs yet? That is exactly the position.

11308. *By Mr. Nielson:* We have heard a lot about the intemperance of men during the cutting season—what is the average of intemperate men? Two seasons ago I think there was only one case in our gang of a man leaving through intemperance out of eleven men.

11309. Last year? None.

11310. Suppose one of a gang does not turn up to his work on Monday morning does he leave the gang? Not at all. If a man does not turn up he has got a chance for a day or two, but if he continues to stop away he leaves the gang.

11311. You discourage in every way intemperate habits among the men? We get paid monthly, and if men do anything in that line we cannot stop them. The local gangs that I have been working with have not been drinking men.

11312. Have you any provision in your union rules whereby a man can be expelled from the union if he neglects his work through intemperance? Yes.

11313. You would enforce it if cases occur? We cannot expel him from the union, but if a man absents himself from his work through drink and the ganger discharges him then the union will uphold the ganger.

11314. *By the Chairman:* You cannot expel him from the union? No; we cannot do that.

11315. Do you not think it would be a good thing to free the union of men who bring discredit upon it through intemperance? I do not know.

11316. *By Mr. Nielson:* Not necessarily for the first offence, but a man who habitually absents himself from his work? Here is a copy of our rules, and you will find a reference to that in the "objects."

11317. You interpret the clause "working against the members' interests" as referring to intemperance? Yes.

11318. *By Mr. Paget:* How many members have you in the union? We closed the season with thirty-nine in this branch.

11319. We have 5,000 or 6,000 kanakas engaged in the sugar industry at present who Federal legislation says may be deported at the end of this year, so how many white men will be required to take their places? So far as I can see, there will be plenty of labour available for the number of men they put into the fields.

11320. Presuming that cultivation is carried on in a proper manner, how many white men will be required to fill the places of the men who are now in the industry? In the Northern Rivers of New South Wales they have worked with white labour for fifty years and there has never been any difficulty. I have never seen a farmer with a gang of ten or twelve men in the field at one time. I have only seen gangs of four or five. The men were put on chipping in the slack season, and when that was done there was no more work for them to do, and they had to go away and look for work wherever they could get it.

11321. The statement has been made that there are plenty of men available, but what I wish to know is how many men do you think will be required after the cessation of the Polynesian labour, and their numbers are roughly put down at 6,000? I think a great deal less than that would do it.

11322. You do not care to give an opinion on it? No.

WILLIAM CUMMIEY, Labourer and Selector, examined:

11323. *By the Chairman:* You are a labourer? Yes. I have been leader of a cane gang.

11324. You represent the Sugar Workers' Union? Yes.

11325. You heard Mr. Sherrington give his evidence? Yes.

11326. Do you agree with the statements he has made? Yes; so far as I heard them.

11327. There is no use your reiterating all he said if you agree with it; but can you address us on any other subject? Yes.

11328. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you at present in employment? I am a settler here.

11329. *By the Chairman:* On what subject do you wish to be heard? In 1903 I had a contract from Mr. Hedd.

11330. What has that got to do with the subject of our inquiry—Is it a grievance? No.

11331. Was it a contract for cane-cutting? Yes; I was leader of the gang. We cut for Messrs. Hodd and O'Connor, and they were both well satisfied with our work.

11332. Were you satisfied with the money you received? It was our first year, and we were just testing it.

W. Cummiey.
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- W. Cuddihy. 11333. What were you getting? 5s. per ton to cut, load, trash, and put in the lines.
 11334. *By Mr. Paget*: You undertook the whole operation of harvesting for 5s. per ton? Yes.
 16 May, 1906. 11335. And you took the fields on a face, good, bad, and indifferent? Yes.
 11336. *By the Chairman*: Is that the price that is ruling now? The prices seem to be a little more now. That was just a rough start. The price on that occasion was just a shade too small. We made 27s. 7d. each per week and tucker.
 11337. Is there anything else you wish to say? Yes. We finished the contract. Mr. Hodd was well satisfied with our work, and he gave the gang a bonus of £1 each. He gave me a bonus of £5 for myself, and said he was well satisfied.
 11338. Were you working at canecutting last year? I was ploughing.
 11339. *By Mr. Paget*: What wages did you get as ploughman? 25s. a week.
 11340. Was it a permanent job? Yes; it was ploughing and any sort of farm work.
 11341. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you intend going out to work this season? I cannot go out this season, as I have some improvements to effect on my own selection.
 11342. Cannot you get a permit to allow you to go out and work? There are some improvements I have got to put up this year.
 11343. But even if you are a selector you can go out and work? It pays me just as well to stop on my selection and improve it.
 11344. Is there any particular point in connection with the industry that you wish to give evidence on? I do not find any trouble in getting men. I can always get plenty if I want them.
 11345. *By the Chairman*: Do you think there are plenty of men about now? I live on the road between here and Cairns, and within the last two months over 200 men passed my place.
 11346. Looking for work? Yes; and coming to me for tucker.
 11347. You consider that there is plenty of labour then? I consider there is labour enough here for three or four gangs.
 11348. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you any knowledge of the number of men engaged in the industry here? I know there are a large number.
 11349. *By Mr. Nielson*: You say you were head of the gang? Yes.
 11350. Did you have much trouble with men who neglected their work through drink? I had a clause dealing with that between myself and the men.
 11351. Did you have much trouble with them? No.
 11352. What is your opinion about the sobriety of the average man in the canefields? There were only four men that I had to sack during the time I was leading the gang.
 11353. How many were in the gang? They averaged eighteen all through the season.
 11354. Then you only had twenty-two men altogether right through the season? Some of the men left on their own account. Nine of the men went right through the season with me.
 11355. *By Mr. Paget*: Fifty per cent. of the gang went right through the season? Yes. They did trashing, cutting, loading, and all.
 11356. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else? The following year I went to Ingham and took on another gang.
 11357. You feel pretty confident as to the labour supply for the future? I feel confident that the labour can be obtained for the future.
 11358. *By Mr. Nielson*: How long would it take an average man who had never cut cane before to learn the work? From three days to a week. I gave a man three or four days, and if he was not able to cut cane in that time I discharged him.

JAMES DEVON, Labourer, examined:

- J. Devon. 11359. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A labourer.
 11360. You appear as a representative of the Sugar Workers' Union? Yes.
 16 May, 1906. 11361. Did you hear Mr. Snerrington give his evidence? I heard part of his evidence.
 11362. Do you agree with the part that you did hear? I agree with some of it.
 11363. How long have you been working here? I have been here for twelve months.
 11364. Were you used to agricultural labour before? I cut cane in the Mackay district the year before and also in the Cairns district.
 11365. On what subject do you wish to speak to us? I heard Mr. Horton say that the men were not reliable last year. We had a gang that went right through the season; there was not a man who lost an hour except through sickness.
 11366. Not through intemperance? No.
 11367. Do you come in contact with the casual labour that is passing through the district? Yes.
 11368. Were the members of your gang local men or casual labourers? Some were casual and some were local men.
 11369. And the casual labourers worked right through the season? Yes.
 11370. You found them a good class of men? Yes.
 11371. What were you getting for canecutting? 3s. 6d. a ton.
 11372. What wages did you make? 28s. 6d. a week, over and above rations.
 11373. Were you satisfied with those wages? I was not.
 11374. What do you think a fair rate? About 7s. a day and rations for ten and a-half hours a day in the field, wet and dry.
 11375. *By Mr. Paget*: That is for cutting and loading? Yes.
 11376. What do you think a fair wage for ordinary cultivation in the off season? 25s. to 30s. a week, and found.
 11377. *By the Chairman*: Are there many unemployed here just now? To my knowledge there has been an average of about three men a day coming to me for work. I am trashing cane by contract at present.
 11378. What are you getting? 22s. an acre.
 11379. Are you working on the co-operative principle? Yes.
 11380. Could the farmers pay the wages you have indicated if they did not get the bounty? I think they could.
 11381. In competition with the world? Yes.

11382. Have you lost much time in looking for work in previous years? No. I have been out of work for about six weeks altogether here.

J. Devon.

11383. Had you ever occasion to go to the Labour Bureau about work? No.

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11384. Do you think that a Labour Bureau would be of assistance to men? I think it would be of great assistance to men going to a strange place in search of work.

11385. Are you aware that there is a branch of the bureau in Geraldton? No. I do not think any travellers can find it.

11386. *By Mr. Nielson:* Are you of opinion that there will be plenty of labour for the harvesting this year? I think so if they give sufficient notice. None of us know whether the company are going to cut or whether the farmers are going to do it themselves.

11387. Have you made no inquiries? Yes, both at the mill and from the farmers.

11388. Have you been able to get any contracts? The farmers told me to wait until they had seen the mill officials, and when I went to the mill I was told to wait until they got information from headquarters in Sydney.

11389. *By Mr. Paget:* You have gathered that it is the intention of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company to form gangs to cut the registered cane this year? That is what we have been led to believe.

11390. You have no reason to believe that the local labour will not be absorbed? No.

11391. You do not think that men walking about here will be passed over in favour of men from the South? I could not say anything about that. I have no idea what they are going to do.

11392. You are not afraid that you will not be able to get work here yourself? I think I can get work.

11393. Have you given the subject of workers' homes any consideration? I have given it some thought, but I do not think there is much chance of getting land. It would be a good idea if workers could get land.

11394. If small blocks were made available, do you think it would be a good thing for the workers? Yes.

11395. Would you settle upon such a block yourself? I would. It would keep men from walking about looking for work.

JOHN PATERSON, Labourer, examined:

11396. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A labourer.

J. Paterson.

11397. You appear here as the representative of the Sugar Workers' Union? Yes.

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11398. Are you employed at the present time? Yes; trashing cane for Mr. Beckett.

11399. What are you getting? 22s. 6d. per acre.

11400. Are you working with Devon? No.

11401. Did you have any experience cutting cane last year? I have been cutting cane since I was born, practically.

11402. Were you reared here? No; in Mackay.

11403. Did you cut cane here last year? Yes.

11404. What is a fair price for cutting cane here? 3s. 6d. to 4s. per ton is on offer, up to 7s. per ton, according to the weight of the crop.

11405. Do you think there will be any difficulty in getting men to cut it on those terms next year? I do not think so.

11406. What is a fair wage for men to get in the slack season? From 25 to 30 "bob" a week and found is little enough when you have to work from daylight till dark.

11407. *By Mr. Paget:* I suppose most of the cane is harvested on contract and not on wages? Yes.

11408. If wages were paid what would be a fair thing? £2 a week and found.

11409. Did you hear Mr. Sherrington give his evidence? Partly.

11410. Do you agree with it—I suppose you talked this matter over amongst yourselves before you came here? No. I did not think I would be wanted to come and I did not take any interest in the matter at all.

11411. We do not wish to duplicate the evidence if you agree with what Sherrington and Devon said? I agree with Devon's statements.

11412. Do you own a selection here? I do not.

11413. Did you hear what I said to Devon about having small blocks of land as workers' homes? Yes.

11414. Would you be in favour of some such system being initiated if possible? Yes, I think it would be a good thing.

11415. Do you think it would be possible for a man to utilise his labour profitably on a small block? Yes.

11416. Especially if he married and settled down? Rather.

11417. It would give him an opportunity to get married? It would.

11418. Is there anything further you wish to say? I might as well mention about the trashing and stripping of cane. The price we are getting is from £1 to 22s. 6d. per acre. That is not enough according to the weight of crop. If it is a 30-ton crop it is worth 30 "bob" an acre, and even then men will not make too much. Taking the average man, his work each day would not be more than one-quarter of an acre. On a 20-ton crop of standing cane he would make 5 "bob" a day. Well, 5s. a day and find yourself is not enough if a man has to work from, say, half-past 5 in the morning till half-past 6 at night.

11419. What do you reckon your rations cost? From 14s. to 15s. a week. In Mackay and other places things are cheaper than they are here.

11420. Can you give me your idea of the number of white men who will be required to take the places of the kanakas who will not be employed after this year? Do you mean taking the year through?

11421. Yes; and cultivating the crop as it should be cultivated, in a proper manner? I reckon three-fourths of the number of white men would do.

11422. Seventy-five per cent. of white men would take the place of the 6,000 kanakas? Yes; that is my experience of them.

WILLIAM HENRY CALLOW, Cane Farmer, examined:

11423. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your farm? 65 acres.

W. H. Callow.

11424. Is it all under cane? It is all under cultivation.

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11425. How much cane have you? 40 acres.

11426. Are you registered? Yes; I have been registered since 1903.

- W. H. Callow. 11427. Have you been employing local labour or casual labour? Local labour.
11428. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you any family labour engaged on your farm? None whatever.
- 16 May, 1906. 11429. What wages are you paying at the present time for slack season work? I pay £1 a week for ordinary labourers and 25s. a week for ploughmen.
11430. What do you pay through the cutting season? It is let by contract.
11431. What did you get last year's crop cut for? 3s. 6d. per ton.
11432. What did the crop average per acre? 17 tons.
11433. Are you one of the farmers who are joining together to employ two or three gangs of white men or do you intend to employ a gang on your own account? That is fixed by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.
11434. Was your cane cut by the company's gang last year? No; by a contractor, who took it individually, and he paid the men himself.
11435. We gathered from the evidence this morning that some few farmers joined together last year with the object of getting their crops cut by white labour? We propose to join together this year on the company's conditions.
11436. I suppose the contract is paid on a sliding scale based on the tonnage per acre? Each farmer pays the contract price. Some farmers pay more than others, but none pay less than 3s. 6d. Some went up to 4s. 6d.
11437. That was for the lighter crops? Yes.
11438. Was it trashed cane? Yes, that was the price for cutting and loading.
11439. Presuming it was untrashed cane, how much extra would you expect to be paid under the contract, say, on a 17-ton contract? I consider 1s. a ton is not out of the way. That is a fair deal between man and master.
11440. If the cane had been untrashed you would have expected to pay 4s. 6d.? Yes.
11441. *By the Chairman:* Is there anything else you would like to speak about? I have been amongst sugar for sixteen years, including four years in Muckay, and the rest of my life on the Johnstone River. I have always found that white men can work as well among cane as coloured labour.
11442. Even on the Johnstone River? Yes.
11443. *By Mr. Paget:* Men can do the work provided the money is in it? Yes. So long as the federal conditions keep on, and the bonus is there, there is no fear whatever for the small farmer.
11444. *By the Chairman:* The bonus or protection in some form is necessary? Yes.
11445. Are you a married man? Yes.
11446. Have you any family? One child.
11447. What sort of health have your wife and child? First-class health.
11448. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you given any consideration to the question of the labour supply after the current year, when a greater number of white men will be required in the sugar industry? It is hard to say; but there are more men talking about the district than can be employed.
11449. I am speaking of the new condition of things after the end of this year.—Do you think there will be sufficient men available for the next crushing season? That is a very hard question to answer, because this is only a small community. We do not know what is going on down South or in the North in the mining districts; but to fulfil all the contracts for the season there are not enough men in the district at the present time.
11450. Have the farmers as a body done anything to try to provide themselves with the labour that will be necessary in the future? So far as I am concerned, nothing has been done. There has been a lot of talk about doing things, but nothing has yet been done.
11451. I suppose everything has to be talked about first? That is all that has been done.
11452. *By the Chairman:* You are of opinion that sufficient action has not been taken to introduce labour into the district? Yes.
11453. *By Mr. Paget:* But action has not been necessary hitherto? So far it has not been necessary I have been registered since 1903, and I have always had sufficient labour.
11454. *By Mr. Nielson:* There are more white men coming into the district every year? Yes. There are more white men knocking about the district now than there were before registration commenced.
11455. *By Mr. Paget:* Are the men who came into the district last year generally better, as a class, than the men who used to come here some years ago? During my three years' experience of cutting with white labour the first gang was very poor; the second year the cutting was not first class, but they were good men; and last year they were first class.
11456. *By the Chairman:* The quality of the labour is distinctly improving? Yes, in my estimation.
11457. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you know whether any proportion of the men who came last year were men who had come before? Practically, they were strangers.

ROBERT WATSON, Pig Farmer, examined:

- R. Waugh. 11458. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A small farmer.
11459. What is the area of your farm? 122 acres.
11460. What area have you under cane? I am 12 miles away, and I am pig farming.
- 16 May, 1906. 11461. What evidence do you desire to give? Simply with reference to the labour passing through.
11462. Are you on a road? My house is situated about 120 yards from the road. Since I was requested to appear before the Commission I have made a note of all the men passing that I have seen. Of course, four or five might pass in a day that I would not see at all; but the average for the last five weeks has been forty-one men per week.
11463. Passing the one way? No; both ways. The majority were coming this way.
11464. *By Mr. Paget:* Is your house situated between here and the Mulgrave? Yes, 12 miles from here on the Cairns road.
11465. *By the Chairman:* The same condition of things existed before you began to take notice of it? Yes, for the last three months. The stream of labour commences about March, and it will continue probably until the end of July, and then it will slack off till Christmas.
11466. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you been long resident in the district? Twenty-two years.
11467. Do you know of any subsidiary crops that might be grown that would absorb labour during the off season? There are several crops. For instance, coffee could be grown on hilly ground.
11468. When would the picking season start? Pretty well in the sugar-crushing season.

11469. Then that crop would interfere with the labour supply in the cane-fields? Then there is sisal hemp; but I am afraid there is too much rain for it here and the soil is too rich. Rice grows fairly well, and you can get two crops in a year; and maize is a good crop, which can be grown all the year round. You can make it come in to suit yourself. It commands a good price too. It has been fetching 3s. a bushel for the last eighteen months here, and now it is selling at from 4s. to 4s. 6l. a bushel. R. Waugh. 16 May, 1906.

11470. Do you think there will be sufficient labour for the current year? I have not a shadow of a doubt that there will be sufficient men for the present year, but it is rather problematical whether there will be enough in the future, because there are likely to be a few railways started up North, and they will take away part of the labour; but, as far as I can see, at present there are any amount of fairly likely men.

11471. There is a big gap to be filled up after this year? What are 6,000 men to Queensland? Practically nothing.

11472. Especially to those who are not interested? Why, you will see 6,000 men pass through here in one season. Things are very bad in the South and the West, and men are flocking to the coastal districts. There may be more men available now than there will be next year, but I have not a shadow of a doubt that there will be enough men. Up to the present the farmers' efforts have been negative. They have never provided housing or shelter or cooking accommodation. Not three farmers in this district have a good house in which cane-cutters can live.

11473. As a general rule cane-cutting gangs provide their own tents? But in a district with such an abnormal rainfall it is unreasonable to expect men to live in a calico house. If the farmers would only provide housing accommodation they would get plenty of labour.

11474. Do you think that if a farmer who is cutting 300 tons of cane has a gang of twenty men sent to him he should provide housing accommodation for those twenty men? He would not require twenty men to cut that crop.

11475. But the gang that was sent might contain twenty men? Already a few of the farmers have combined to get men to cut their cane; and if they also combined to put up quarters for the men in a corner of their area, the men could cut out five or six farms, and reside in that place. You cannot expect men to come from New South Wales and other places and live in a tent in such a wet season as we have.

11476. Is the cane-cutting done during your wet season? A large quantity of rain falls during the cutting season.

HENRY JAMES WORTH, Labourer, examined:

11477. *By the Chairman:* What are you? I am a labourer in cane at the present time.

H. J. Worth.

11478. Did you ever have any experience in attempting to grow bananas? No; I can only speak from what came under my observation.

16 May, 1906.

11479. Do you know that an attempt was made to grow bananas by a white man? Yes. It was very successful from his point of view. He could do the work and carry it out in every respect, but he was handicapped.

11480. How? The Chinese used to block him with his punts when he came here. He came in with his load of bananas and he was kept back until the ships would not take his bananas. On one or two occasions he had to throw his bananas into the river, because the ships would not take them and he could only sell a few of them in the town. At last he had to sell out to the Chinese merchants. Tan See bought him out, and he was thoroughly disgusted with it.

11481. *By Mr. Paget:* What was the name of the man who grew the bananas? Alexander Cuttle. This was seven or eight years ago.

11482. *By the Chairman:* Did he have any difficulty about shipping them? He used to blame the shipping companies for assisting the Chinese to shunt him off. I do not know if he had any grounds for blaming the shipping companies, but he said the shipping companies said they did not want his bananas on their ships. He told me that himself. Obstacles were put in his way and he could not make a success of it at all, although he could cultivate the crop just as well as the Chinese.

11483. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you aware that a great number of bananas are grown in the South by white people? No.

11484. At Sanford and other places they are grown by white men, who manage to overcome the Chinese competition? I believe they could do it here, but white people do not go in for that class of occupation, and unless they get the virgin scrub they cannot get the soil for it. The bananas exhaust the soil in a very few years.

11485. *By Mr. Nielson:* They do not manure the land? No; at the present time they have no manure.

11486. I know some places where bananas have grown for twenty-five or thirty years on the one spot? I know one place where they have grown for twenty-five years.

11487. *By Mr. Paget:* Can you tell us what class of labour Cuttle employed—Did he employ coloured labour? Yes. He had one white man with him always, but he also employed a Malay, an aboriginal, and, I believe, a kanaka sometimes.

11488. He employed any labour he could get? Yes; but he always had a white man with him.

FRED TANNA, Pacific Islander, examined:

[Mr. Sullivan acted as interpreter.]

11489. *By the Chairman:* How long have you been in Queensland? Twenty-six years.

F. Tanna.

11490. Are you married? No.

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11491. Have you got a farm? No; I always work.

11492. You work now? Yes; for Chinaman.

11493. *By Mr. Paget:* Not under agreement? No.

11494. How many work like that? Plenty "boy" work like that.

Mr. Sullivan: There is only one Chinese employer on the books.

11495. *By the Chairman:* You want to go home? Suppose Government say we must go home, then we go; but suppose Government say we stop, then we stop.

11496. Your friends stop at home now? Yes. There must be some friends at home yet.

11497. You are not afraid to go home? No. They will not kill me.

11498. *By Mr. Paget:* You would like to stop suppose Government let you stop? Yes. If they wish me to stop some "boy" stop, but if they say we must go, then we go.

CHARLES EDWARD JODRELL, Cane Farmer, examined:

C. E. Jodrell. 11499. *By the Chairman:* You are a cane farmer? Yes. I am president of the Johnstone River Cane Growers' Association, and am deputed by them to give evidence.

16 May, 1906. 11500. What is the area of your farm? 257 acres.

11501. How much is under cane? About 215 acres.

11502. How long have you been cane-growing in this district? Twelve and a-half years.

11503. You have some notes of the evidence you wish to give? Yes. 1903 was the first year that cane in any quantity was harvested in the Geraldton district by white labour. The cane so harvested that year and the following two years was—

1903—10,200 tons, or 15 per cent. of the cane supplied to Goondi mill.

1904— 6,800 " 10 " " " " "

1905— 9,800 " 13 " " " " "

As the cane supplied to Mourilyan mill, the only other mill crushing in the district, has always been grown and harvested by coloured labour, the percentage of the total cane crop harvested in this district by white labour would be considerably lower than that given above. It will be also seen that less cane was harvested by white labour last year than in 1904. The chief reason why the employment of white labour has made so little progress in this district is the unreliability of the labour offering—the experiences of those who have ventured to employ white men leaving no encouragement for their neighbours to do so. 7,870 tons were harvested by white labour under contract last year, on which the average price paid was 4s. per ton, and the average amount earned per man per day, 8s., which should give inducement to good reliable men who would earn more than that. 15,000 tons of cane were harvested the same year (1905) by coloured men (Hindoos) under contract, on which the average price paid was 2s. per ton, and the average amount earned per man per day was 7s. 144 white men were engaged throughout last crushing season to keep up the average number actually required—viz., forty-five for harvesting cane under contract. Thirty-eight coloured men were engaged throughout the same season to keep up the average number actually required—viz., thirty for harvesting cane under contract. As a further instance of the unreliability of the white men offering themselves for work in this district, a fire occurred in the cane of a neighbouring farmer, Mr. Ker, who was at the time harvesting his crop with white labour. The fire made it necessary for him to immediately employ extra labour, in order to get the burnt cane to the mill as soon as possible, so as to prevent serious loss. Although there were over forty unemployed in Geraldton at the time, and the price offered, together with the condition of the cane—namely, being burnt, and averaging about 26 tons per acre—was such as to make it a fairly easy task for a man to earn 9s. per day, not one of them could be induced to take the work offered by Mr. Ker and his ganger, who went round the town trying to obtain men. I informed several of the unemployed of the work offered, but without success. I was anxious to see Mr. Ker get men, as otherwise he would require coloured help from me, which I was loth to give, having other work for them to do. Mr. Ker was a considerable loser by not being able to obtain additional men, as his cane deteriorated through slow harvesting, which reduced its value. Owing to the climate a supply of reliable labour is more essential to the welfare, or even to the existence of this district than to any other sugar district in Queensland, as it possesses no secondary or subsidiary industries of any importance. Under twenty men are employed in mining in the district, and the banana industry is altogether in the hands of the Chinese. It is too wet for either dairying or maize-growing, the average annual rainfall being 150 inches, and it is not unusual for the first four months of the year to average 35 inches per month, while for odd years the record has been from 200 to 245 inches per year. The other sugar districts of the State are assisted in their development more or less by the dairying, pastoral, and mining industries. With us it is sugar or nothing. As the bonus declines, so will the sugar industry decline, and when the bonus ceases so must the sugar industry cease to exist, unless the protection duties are considerably raised. For the welfare of the kanakas who may remain in Queensland after this year, and also for the welfare of the industry, especially in the North, the existing law should be altered so as to allow of such kanakas obtaining employment. Such a course would lead to the gradual substitution of white labour for black, and without injury to anyone. Or, all remaining islanders should be compelled to live north of, say, Bowen, where cane-growers are so far from the larger centres of population, which, together with the climate, will necessitate a more gradual substitution of white labour for black than in the South. There can be no great expansion of the sugar industry, as the consumption of the Commonwealth is so near the present yield, and white-grown sugar cannot compete in the world's markets, which means that the sugar industry, of all the great industries of the Commonwealth, is penalised by legislation from ever becoming an export trade, which must be detrimental to Australia, and to Queensland in particular. Consequently, many thousands of acres of the best land in Queensland, which could support hundreds of farmers and give employment to thousands, must remain a waste. The low price paid by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's mills in the North as compared with the price paid by the Northern central mills working under similar conditions, places those supplying cane to the company's mills at a great disadvantage in competing for whatever white labour may be available. Out of the six large mills situated north of Townsville, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company own four. The process by which the Northern tropical agricultural lands on the coast have been settled by white people came to an end on the advent of federation, and not a single mill has been established since federation north of Townsville, and little or no scrub has been cleared since except by Chinese. I, myself, and many farmers are only holding on to our farms to see how the experiment of white labour turns out, as, if it is a failure, we will sell out to Chinamen. In that event the country will suffer, not the farmer, as not only will the industry pass into the hands of the Chinese, as it has already done to a very large extent in the Cairns district, but a large portion of the trade that attends the industry must pass into their hands, too. Farmers are quite willing to try to prevent such a calamity, but must get substantial assistance from the Government in so doing.

11504. *By Mr. Paget:* In what way do you expect the Government to give you substantial assistance, and which Government? The Government Labour Bureau might give free or assisted passages to those they consider reliable to come to the sugar districts.

11505. *By the Chairman:* Who will pay for these passages? The Government.

11506. Which Government do you mean—the Federal Government, the State Government, or the Government of another State? The Federal Government brought on the charge, and they should pay for the passages. In that matter we look towards the State Government, as they are nearly related to us. It would be difficult to say that the 10-acre block system would be a success, as the class of men who would take those 10-acre blocks would probably get much better inducements elsewhere—such as the Darling Downs—and live in a better climate.

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11507. *By Mr. Paget:* Are the wages that are offered in the sugar industry, under the bounty system, not much better than the wages that are offering in the agricultural centres, such as the Darling Downs? The average wages of the men working here—and they were not reliable men—was 8s. a day.

11508. Are those wages not higher than what they earn on the Darling Downs? Yes.

11509. Is that not a sufficient inducement for them to come here? It may be to some people, but I do not think it would be to very many, owing to the disabilities of living in this Northern climate. I have not been on the Darling Downs, but I understand from farmers who have been there that there is no comparison in the way of living.

11510. I believe the people up here go to the Darling Downs as a sanatorium? I have not seen it.

11511. They go there to recuperate? I have not seen anyone do so. I have been twenty-five years living north of Townsville, and I have not been able to get South yet. I think that any reasonable scheme which has for its object the solving of the labour difficulty is worthy of a trial, and I think if the 10-acre block scheme is tried the men should get assistance from the Government—say from the Agricultural Bank. I do not see why the State Government should not resume portions of land in the North, just as they have done in the South. They have spent hundreds of thousands of pounds of the taxpayers' money in resuming land on the Darling Downs and elsewhere, but here, where it will carry a larger population to the square mile than any of those places, they have not invested a penny in that direction. There is also a good trade here.

11512. *By the Chairman:* You mean to repurchase lands? Yes; to resume them, because the best land is already absorbed. They have spent hundreds of thousands of pounds in resuming lands down South which will not carry anything like the population that this country can carry. The average wheat crop, I believe, is about 10 or 12 bushels to the acre, for which they get about 3s. a bushel. The average cane crop would be about 17 or 18 tons to the acre, for which they would get 15s. a ton. I do not see why they cannot resume some of the farms here.

11513. *By Mr. Paget:* I think you said that they might resume some of the large areas here that are not under cane? I think that would be a good idea, too. Either one of them would do so long as the object is achieved of getting the labour settled on small areas. I also think that immigration from Europe is absolutely necessary, without any power being vested in the hands of the Minister to make any restrictions as regards wages, &c., for the first year, as immigrants would be comparatively useless for the first twelve months up North. I think it is absurd to believe that the Commonwealth, which has an area nearly as large as that of Europe, and with only the population of a European city, can be expected to furnish the labour required for its development. It is a bad advertisement. Why, even a State like Victoria ought to absorb 4,000,000 people. I would like to point out that these records have been most carefully compiled, and I believe them to be most accurate.

11514. Is your farm registered for the bonus? No.

11515. *By Mr. Nielson:* You are not doing anything yourself to see how the thing is going to turn out? I can see quite well how it is going to turn out. I will probably register next year.

11516. *By Mr. Paget:* What labour are you employing at the present time? South Sea Island labour.

11517. Have you them under agreement till the end of the year? Yes.

11518. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think the Government ought to resume farms here? Yes; I think that would be the best way of overcoming the difficulty by resuming lands here the same as they have done elsewhere.

11519. At what price could the cane farms be got here? That would be extremely hard to say, as they vary so much. I do not think the amount required would be anything more than the average of the land resumed and cut up, say, on the Darling Downs.

11520. I do not get much idea from that answer—What is the average value of cane grown round here? Do you mean land with a cane crop on it?

11521. Yes; you spoke of them as lands that the Government might resume? I do not know of any particular farms, but I think that is the policy that ought to be pursued.

11522. What would they have to pay? The average price of land in this district would be about £9 an acre.

11523. *By Mr. Paget:* Would that be carrying a cane crop? No; without a cane crop.

11524. *By Mr. Nielson:* What was the price three or four years before federation? Well, the price paid for all land in this district, except that which had scrub on it, was, without exception, £10 to £13.

11525. *By Mr. Paget:* That was before federation? Yes; the company sold it to us for that.

11526. *By Mr. Nielson:* On long terms? Yes; and heavy interest. Five years' terms, and interest bearing 5 per cent.

11527. Generally speaking, has the price of land gone down since federation? Speaking personally, I think I would have had a better chance of selling my land before federation than I have now.

11528. Have many lands changed hands in the last few years? I believe there have been three. There have been some quite recently.

11529. Can you say whether the value of land has gone down or remained stationary in the last four or five years? I do not think there is much difference. It might possibly have gone down a trifle, but we are getting more for our sugar than we used to get before, and the ground is much easier to work. The farmers have pulled the stumps out, and horses can be used in the plough, which could not be done before.

11530. Are you getting just as good crops? I do not think the average is as good. The virgin land will give better crops.

11531. Is labour generally dearer? The coloured labour is dearer.

C. E. Jodrell. 11532. But labour generally? We have only had coloured labour. The white labour has only recently been tried.

11533. Coloured labour is becoming dearer? Yes.

16 May, 1906. 11534. *By Mr. Paget*: What is the difference in the price you have been receiving for cane in the last two years as compared with the prices you received in 1899 and 1900? We were receiving 12s. a ton then, and we are now receiving 15s.

11535. That makes a difference of 4s. on an average crop of 15 tons to the acre? Yes. I have been trying to sell my farm at a reasonable price this last two years, but I have not been able to get even an offer.

11536. The land you speak of as being sold at from £10 to £13 an acre was sold to farmers by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? Yes.

11537. How many years is it since they first initiated that system? Thirteen years ago. I think it was 1893.

11538. Has your association taken any steps to supply themselves with labour after the end of the present year? They have approached the company, and the company have undertaken to procure the labour if it is possible to do so.

11539. After this year? They will be guided a good deal by circumstances; but they say they will try from year to year. They will not take any risk in taking the crop off; but they will do their best to obtain labour from the South. The individual farmers have got labour from the South themselves. I think that, as the Federal Government have taken the labour away from the doors of the farmers, it would be only a bare act of justice if the Federal Government put it back there.

11540. You mean some other class of labour? No; they have seen fit to take away our labour, and it is only fair for the Commonwealth to replace it with labour of another sort.

11541. Supposing the Federal Government will not replace the labour that they have taken away, what will happen to you? Sell to Chinamen to-morrow, or to anybody else rather than be ruined. If any of us saw a chance of getting £2,000 or £3,000 we would sell.

11542. Do you seriously say that there are enough Chinese in North Queensland with sufficient money to take over all your farms? We have every reason to believe so. When federation took place 75 per cent. of the land at Hambleton was owned by white men. Now 75 per cent. of the estate is owned by Chinese, and the Chinese in the Cairns district have already absorbed 50 per cent. of the total land under cane in the district. They own over 6,000 acres out of 12,000 acres under cane.

11543. Those are figures that cannot be disputed—they are not merely hearsay? No; that is evidence I took the trouble to get some time ago.

11544. *By Mr. Nielson*: That is all the outcome of federation, I suppose? The facts speak for themselves. The white owners felt that under the altered conditions it would be wise to sell.

11545. You do not think that the fact that the Hambleton mill paid a very low price for cane as compared with the Mulgrave Central mill had anything to do with it? There are Chinamen supplying cane to the Mulgrave mill as well as to the Hambleton mill.

11546. But you do not think the price paid by the Hambleton mill had anything to do with it? The price paid by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's mills is from 7s. to 9s. lower than the price paid by the central mills, and the farmers who supply cane to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's mills are not in a position to compete with the supplies to the central mills for the white labour.

11547. Then the price paid for cane has as much as, if not more, to do with it than federation? I do not think that when federation first took place the price paid by the central mills was anything like what it is now, whilst the company's prices were much about the same. I do not think that had much to do with the change.

11548. *By Mr. Paget*: Of course, the shareholders in the central mills are practically paying themselves dividends in the shape of an increased price for cane? They are purchasing the mills whilst they are paying themselves those prices for their cane.

11549. In the case of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company it is some other fellow who owns the mill, and not the farmers? That is so. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company must make an abnormal profit. They have had their mill here for the last twenty years, and they have had the mill at Hambleton for a great many years; and if they pay 7s. or 8s. a ton less for cane than the central mills, they must be making a very handsome profit.

11550. *By Mr. Nielson*: You think their mills must be paid for by now? I think they must have been paid for many years ago.

11551. Are you and the other purchasers from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company under an agreement to supply cane to their mill? Yes, but it ceases at the end of this year.

11552. *By Mr. Paget*: That was a part of the contract, I suppose? Yes.

11553. *By Mr. Nielson*: Then at the end of this year those who purchased land from the company will have paid for their farms, and will have completed their agreements to supply cane to the mill? I think the majority of them will have purchased their farms by the end of the year.

11554. And also their agreements to supply cane? Yes. There is another proposal before the farmers now for the next four years after this year.

11555. *By Mr. Paget*: That is for the four years covering the period of the increased bounty? Yes.

11556. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are you interested in any of the projected central or co-operative mills in this district, or have you any connection with those projects? I have not so far. I shall try if I cannot get a fair price from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.

11557. Is the projected central mill across the river the one you have in mind? No. If a mill was built at Daradgee, and it could be proved that the supply of labour was reliable, I would probably like to obtain land there; but I have quite sufficient way things are now. I would like to point out that, though it is often said that the wages paid in the district are not sufficient, they averaged 8s. per day last year.

11558. *By the Chairman*: That was for working days? Yes.

11559. You have a good many wet days here? Yes; but through the harvesting I do not think I have ever known men knock off for a day. If any rain falls they have to go on with the work, because cane stopping on the ground would deteriorate, and every effort is always made to get it to the mill.

GEORGE EDMONSTONE MARKWELL, Solicitor and Cane Farmer, examined :

11560. *By the Chairman*: You are a solicitor of the Supreme Court, and also a canegrower? Yes. I have been here for the last twelve years.

G. E.
Markwell.

11561. What is the area of your farm? 9.5 acres.

11562. How much is under cane? Nearly 7.3 acres this year.

11563. What did you cut last year? Last year was an off year. I only cut 920 tons.

11564. With white or black labour? With black labour.

11565. Are you registered for the bonus now? Yes.

11566. Have you registered your whole area? Yes; except the residential portion. Having some *kaukas* under agreement, I had to provide residence quarters.

11567. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you appearing as the representative of any association? As the representative of the Johnstone River Cane Growers' Association.

11568. *By the Chairman*: What do you say about the present or future prospects with regard to labour? Up till the present the experience we have had is not sufficient to predispose one to feel secure.

11569. *By Mr. Nielson*: You have not had any experience at all? I am speaking as the representative of the Farmers' Association.

11570. But you have had no actual experience yourself? Not of cutting cane with white labour.

11571. You have just had an odd ploughman? I always employ white ploughmen.

11572. *By the Chairman*: Do you think there will be sufficient labour for the requirements of the present year's harvest? Certainly not; so far as I can see.

11573. *By Mr. Nielson*: What do you mean by that? We cannot get men suitable for the work.

11574. Where have you tried to get that information? I have written to friends in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane.

11575. *By the Chairman*: And you think you will be short of cane-cutters? I am doubtful.

11576. Has the Farmers' Association taken any steps to get cane-cutters down South, where there are plenty of them? Overtures were made to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, and they have taken the matter out of our hands so far as this year's cutting is concerned.

11577. *By Mr. Nielson*: They have succeeded in getting labour? They do not guarantee that. They do not guarantee to cut the cane or to get the labour. Their arrangement with us is that they will get the labour to cut our cane at a specific price if they can.

11578. Will they not suffer very much if they do not get the labour to cut their cane? In the first instance we would be the sufferers. The company would say, "We hold you up to the terms of your contract." Each farmer is supposed to supply 30 or 40 tons of cane a day when called upon to do so. We are liable for that if they fail to get the labour.

11579. But are they likely to fail—is it not to their interests to keep the mill going? Yes. Every moment they lose in the mill is money lost to them.

11580. Is not that sufficient security for your labour? On the other hand, they can come on us for non-fulfilment of contract. Any individual farmer who does not come up to time with his cane is beaten at once.

11581. *By the Chairman*: If they can get their money without going to law they will get it? Of course.

11582. That seems to be your security? I am sure they will do all they possibly can to get the labour. Their cane inspector has been through the whole district and has got the names of almost the whole of the available labourers in the district.

11583. *By Mr. Nielson*: Admitting, for the sake of argument, that you cannot get white labour, how will you cut your cane? I would have to scrape together all the coloured labour I could and forfeit the bonus.

11584. Would you lose on that? The probabilities are that I would lose a great deal. The probabilities are that this haphazard labour would be very costly.

11585. *By Mr. Paget*: And you would lose your bonus? Yes; and we might be penalised for a breach of the Act, though I am sure the Minister for Customs would be lenient if he was satisfied that we had done all we could. Hitherto we have cut in groups, and we found it an excellent system. By cutting in groups we concentrated our efforts, and supplied the mill with cane at a minimum amount of cost to ourselves. We wrote to the company asking if the group system could be continued as hitherto with white labour, but they wrote back saying that the cane inspector would be here and they would perhaps take the cutting over. Under those circumstances the group system will not be in vogue. I mention that fact to show that we have left no stone unturned to secure white labour for ourselves.

11586. Although your association did not take steps, the groups of farmers did take steps? Two or three have applied to cut all through the season on their own account.

11587. The whole season through? Yes; but there are no instances so far of groups getting into work so far as cutting is concerned. With the exception of two or three instances, the whole of the cutting has been left to the company.

11588. Because they desire it? Practically.

11589. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you trashed your cane yet? I am just doing so. I only succeeded on Monday last in letting a contract for 60 acres.

11590. At what wage? £1 per acre.

11591. What tonnage of crop? They say 23 tons, and I hope they are right, but I should say 18 tons as nearly as possible.

11592. *By the Chairman*: Had you offers to trash it before at a higher price than that? This is the first opportunity I have had of trashing. Since I have let this contract I have been approached by three others.

11593. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would it not be too wet to trash? The wetter the better.

11594. What prevented you doing it before? I could not get the labour.

11595. *By the Chairman*: We were told that there were forty or fifty men here? Except on Monday last, when these men were good enough to take my work in hand, I have not had one application for work in the last six months. I was anxious to go in under the registered areas, and in August last I was preparing to plant. In consequence of not being able to get white labour, I did not get my crop in till October. I stuck to white labour, and got my crop in.

11596. *By Mr. Nielson*: You were in the middle of the crushing season? It was the crushing season, but it was not the middle.

G. E.
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11597. I suppose all the available labour was employed, or else had gone to a district where they could get employment? You would have thought I could have got the limited amount of labour that I wanted—it was so small. I could not even get a ploughman, and had it not been for the kindness of a neighbour I would not have been able to do any drilling. The result of getting my crop in so late will be that I shall lose about £100. The crop will go 15 tons to the acre, whereas if I had got it in in August it would have gone 20 tons.

11598. Do you always plant in August? For most canes it is the best time, except for Singapore.

11599. *By Mr. Paget*: Could you not utilise the floating labour in the off season in preparing the land so as to have it available for the crushing season? We shall have to do that.

11600. You will have to alter your methods somewhat? Instead of falling in with the best conditions of nature we shall have to force the conditions.

11601. *By Mr. Nielson*: Suppose you planted in May, would it affect the cane? The ground is cold then, and the plants come away very badly, slowly, and more unevenly. In the interval the weeds are growing with tremendous rapidity. It would mean an immense amount of hard work with the hoe if we planted in April or May.

11602. Is it too wet to plant in February or March? Yes; it would be next to impossible to touch it. As near as one can get, I dare say that the middle of March would be as early as you could plant. There have been individual instances of planting in February, and an excellent crop of 40 acres was obtained from a crop planted in that month. But those are very rare instances.

11603. Did you plant by contract in October? No; wages.

11604. What did it cost you to plant it per acre? I have not made it up yet. Do you mean to include the whole operation of cutting, planting, carting, drilling, and everything else?

11605. All except the drilling? In order to utilise what little forces I had, I did not cover by hand at all. Not a single hand touched my plants. I had a little apparatus, and I poured the plants through a funnel. There was no adjusting them, and I just let them take their chance. I just made the best use of the limited labour I had, so that the cost of the labour I had would not be a fair average of what the cost would be. Without my books it would be hard to make it up.

11606. Do you use the cane-planting machine to any extent in this district? It was introduced many years ago by Mr. Brooks, as a Bundaberg appliance, but it was not effective. There was no reason why it should not have been, but it was said to be no use, and it passed out of use.

11607. *By Mr. Paget*: You devised a more simple machine? I would not call it a machine; it is an apparatus.

11608. But by that operation you are allowing Nature to take her chance with the eyes? Yes.

11609. It was stated in evidence this morning that the farmers in this district do not provide good housing accommodation for their employees? I think that is very wrong. In most instances that I know of, the housing accommodation provided for the men is better than the farmers have for themselves. The accommodation I have provided for my men during the last six or seven months is infinitely better than my own. Last year, and previously, white men were cutting by contract, and the farmers gave the men the best accommodation they could. Of course, it was not of the best, and was not of such a character as to induce men to work in the industry; but each farmer would have to be at immense expense if he had to provide accommodation for his cane-cutters; but, with our system of groups, that can be got over by sharing the expense among all the farmers in the group. That is what we intend to do, if possible.

11610. A witness this morning suggested that four or five farmers might have one building from which the gang could work? A scheme of that sort has been discussed, and would have been arranged for if the company had not taken over the cutting. Mr. Horton has the most superlative accommodation provided for his men. I have never seen better accommodation anywhere.

11611. I suppose you know that the provisions of the Shearers' and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act apply to the employers of more than nine men? Yes.

11612. But, even when they do not employ nine men, the farmers will take reasonable care that their men are properly housed? I am absolutely sure of that. All the men I know are extremely solicitous about the welfare of their employees. There is a certain bond of sympathy between us all. What can we expect from our men unless we give them reasonable accommodation?

11613. A witness said this morning that the accommodation was very bad? I can contradict that, emphatically. Ninety per cent. of the farmers are only making a living. They are living reasonably well, but they have not a penny of surplus cash to provide any extra accommodation for themselves, let alone for their men. In regard to trashing, I know of one instance, with which I was personally connected, in which four men took a contract to trash 70 acres at £1 an acre. They did 10 acres and threw up the contract. They said they could not make more than 15s. a week and found it. In another instance, three men undertook to trash for a farmer at Mundoo. They were supplied with rations, and they consumed £9 worth of rations, and the whole area trashed was only 4 acres. Those facts are hardly arguments in favour of there being a genuine and reliable supply of labour. The great curse hitherto has been the public-house. There has been too much drink everywhere.

11614. We have been told that intemperance has not been a curse here? I must emphatically assert that intemperance is the greatest cause of apprehension and the greatest difficulty that we have to contend with, and it is the cause of the non-performance of a great deal of work. It is impossible, I think, to devise a scheme to relieve the men. They must have some relaxation. They have no club to go to, and they have really nothing to fall back upon but the public-house. It is a terrible temptation, and I dare say, if I were in the same position, I might succumb too.

11615. At a place like Goondi could not the farmers and the employees start a school of arts? They have a good school of arts at Goondi for the employees.

11616. It is too far away for the employees on the farms? Yes; and I do not know whether they could have access to it.

11617. Is it only for the employees of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? Yes. We have a school of arts in town, but the men want some relaxation. They must have something to give a little fillip to existence and to take their minds from their work and their hard living.

11618. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you would like to touch upon? I would like to emphasise the position that we are pretty well sure to be in unless the bounty is continued.

11619. You think the continuance of the bounty is absolutely essential? Yes. If it is not continued, we cannot possibly make the money that we get for our cane go anywhere near meeting the calls upon us for labour.

(Geraldton.)

THURSDAY, 17 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

Mr. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) |

Mr. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

Mr. C. E. NIELSON, M.L.A.

CHARLES WILLIAM MCGOWAN, Licensed Victualler and President of the Johnstone River Darradgee Central Sugar Mill Association, further examined:

11620. *By the Chairman:* You wish to give further evidence before the Commission? Yes; I would like to give some further evidence with reference to settling people on the land. With reference to the Darradgee Central Mill lands, I have on hand application from a group of farmers' sons from the Echuca district of Victoria for thirty 10-acre cane-cutters' blocks. These young men are desirous of engaging in the industry, and, having a certain amount of cash, they prefer to gain the necessary experience as workers before investing straight out on their own account.

C. W.
McGowan.
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11621. They prefer to acquire the necessary knowledge of cane-growing before they launch out into their own farms? Yes.

11622. They would be willing to come up and work and acquire experience? Yes; they would. I have further applications from the Tweed River, Richmond River, Lismore, and other agricultural centres of northern New South Wales.

11623. *By Mr. Paget:* Why are you unable to comply with their wishes? Because the Government of the day have not so far acceded to our request for a mill to be established at Darradgee. That is the only reason.

11624. *By the Chairman:* How many applications are there? These are applications from Victoria and New South Wales.

11625. Did you say you had 400 applications altogether? Yes; these thirty are included in the 400 I mentioned yesterday.

11626. How many came from the Tweed? One of these applicants represents a group of ten. The price for land came up yesterday. The average price of the land in the Darradgee Central Mill group—that is, for the very pick of the blocks for sale in small areas—has been fixed at £6 10s.

11627. *By Mr. Paget:* Those lands are not carrying crops of cane? No.

11628. Is the land cleared? About 1,500 acres are cleared.

11629. And it is fetching £6 10s. an acre? Yes.

11630. *By the Chairman:* You could actually sell it at that price? That is the selling price of the owners.

11631. That would be the value if there was a mill there? Yes. On the other side of the river is a block of 61 acres on the Goondi Estate, which was recently sold to a working farmer at £25 per acre—plus £13 per acre for the portion under plant cane—and £9 per acre for the part under ratoons. The average price of cane-bearing land on the Goondi Estate, as stated by a witness yesterday, is not the true average. It is the minimum price of a block of land admittedly one of the poorest on the estate, as evidenced by the fact that this block has been repeatedly thrown back on the hands of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company during the past three years, and has been so treated recently by a Selheim resident who had agreed to purchase, but found the land not up to value. The price of this particular block is £9 per acre—plus £4 per acre for ratoon crop. To my certain knowledge the average price of cane-bearing land on the Goondi Estate is nearer £15 per acre—plus heavy charges of from £4 to £8 per acre for the ratoon crop, and a proportionately heavy charge for plant crop. I am speaking as an auctioneer and land agent, whose business it is to be acquainted with the price of any land sold in the district. The lowest price for scrub land on the Goondi Estate at the present day is £7 per acre, and culled land at that; this by way of showing the fair average price put on the central mill lands by the selling owners.

(Ingham.)

FRIDAY, 18 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

Mr. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) |

Mr. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

Mr. C. E. NIELSON, M.L.A.

THOMAS TOWNSON, Cane Farmer, examined:

11632. *By the Chairman:* What are you? A cane farmer.

11633. What is the area of your farm? 130 acres of cane. I cut about 100 acres a year on an average.

11634. Are you registered for the bonus? Yes.

11635. For the whole 100 acres? Yes.

11636. How long have you been registered? I have just registered this year, when I got the opportunity.

11637. Previously you cut with coloured labour? Yes.

11638. Are you employing any men at the present time? Yes.

11639. What wages are you giving? £1 a week and found.

11640. Have you any difficulty in supplying your needs on those terms? Not just at present.

11641. Have you had any previous experience in the employment of white labour? Not in cane, but I have in contracting for road making, bridge building, and building generally.

11642. What was your experience of the labour you employed for road making? I found the labour all right in that respect.

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- T. TOWNSON. 11643. You got decent, respectable men? Yes.
11644. Have you had much trouble with regard to intemperance? That is the biggest curse here. There are good men, and they are put down as loafers, but they are not. They are the working bullocks of the country, but it is the drink that cooks them.
11645. I presume you are a ratepayer? Yes. I have been on the river for twenty-five years. I have been farming for five years.
11646. Have any fresh public-house licenses been granted during the last two or three years? The East Ingham Hotel is the last that was licensed, and it was built six or seven years.
11647. *By Mr. Paget*: How do you propose to get your cane harvested this year? I am going to give men 30s. a week and found.
11648. Do you think you will have any trouble in getting sufficient men to harvest your crop at those wages? I shall only be employing five or six men, and I think I shall be safe. I do not know how other people will get on.
11649. *By the Chairman*: Do you cook for the men? Yes.
11650. How do you house them? My men are in a grass house with a boarded floor, and they tucker in my kitchen.
11651. The food is the same as you eat yourself? Yes.
11652. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you receive any complaints about the rations? I have never received any complaints.
11653. *By the Chairman*: When you employ men on contracts, you do not cook for them? No. We generally give them 8s. a day, and they find themselves.
11654. You are aware that as a rule farm labourers prefer to have their food cooked for them? Yes. I think they would rather work for less money and have their food cooked, provided it was well cooked and nicely served. A man working all day does not like to come home at night and have to cook for himself. In fact half the men starve themselves rather than do it.
11655. *By Mr. Paget*: On farms the practice is to provide cooked food for the employees, but in the case of big contracts they have to attend to their own cooking? Yes; the contractor has to see to it.
11656. As a rule he employs a cook? Yes.
11657. And where it is a share-and-share-alike contract, the cook takes his share? Yes; he is counted as one of the cutters.
11658. *By the Chairman*: You consider that giving men their food well cooked and comfortably served is one of the main factors in making them contented? I am sure of it.
11659. *By Mr. Paget*: Is there anything you would specially like to say to the Commission? Yes. We are getting 5s. a ton bonus this year, and the cane cutters would like all of it for the cutting.
11660. It is granted for the extra cost of the crop over and above the cost of production by coloured labour? Yes.
11661. *By the Chairman*: What proportion of the bonus do you think should go to the farmer for the cost of cultivation? I have never figured it out; but it should not all go to the men.
11662. Is there anything else you wish to refer to? I think that labour can be got, but it wants bringing here. There are any amount of really good and suitable men in the South. Six men came here the other day, and from their looks they should turn out "tip-toppers."
11663. Did they come here themselves? They were brought from Brisbane by Mr. R. G. Johnson. He advertised for thirty men, and 300 wanted to come up.
11664. Do you know what wages they are getting? They are to get £1 a week and found for ordinary cultivation work, and 30s. a week and found for cutting and loading. Those are about the ruling rates here.
11665. Will most of the cutting be done by day labour this year? I think so. Those men informed me that the biggest part of the men in the South are afraid to come to the North because they say we do not want white labour; but we do want white labour, although there are a few farmers who are married to the blackfellows and want to stick to them.
11666. Are the farmers prepared to give white labour a fair trial? I am sure of it. When the white labourers are brought here from the South it will be found that there are any amount of them, and instead of the farmers running after the contractors, as at present, it will be found that the contractors will run after the farmers for work next year. The men who have come here say that it has opened their eyes, and they would not believe the conditions that existed here. Down South everything is against the men coming up here. They say that when they mentioned about coming to Queensland they were told: "They will fetch you up there, employ you two or three weeks, and then sack you. You will then be on your beam ends, and you cannot get away, and you will founder in the country." The men who are coming up now will be an object lesson to the men in the South. I would like to say that I am in favour of close settlement for the men who come up. They should be given 10 or 20 acres of land, according to the character of the land, and be allowed to settle on it.
11667. *By Mr. Paget*: A system of workers' homesteads? Yes. That would be a great opportunity to settle in the country.
11668. *By the Chairman*: Will men avail themselves of such offers as that? I am sure of it. These men I speak of told me personally that they wish to stop in the district.
11669. Are they married men? Some are married, and some are not.
11670. Are you married? Yes.
11671. Have you any family? Yes.
11672. What sort of health have your wife and family got? We all have fair health, taking it all round. We have a disease here which we have to contend with. It is called the earth-eating disease, but I cannot think of the medical name for it. I am going in to the hospital to be treated for it.
11673. That is a thing they will get over by medical treatment, but what about the general health of the district? As to general health, I consider the Herbert River district is one of the healthiest places in the North.
11674. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you belong to the Farmers' Association? Yes.
11675. Do you represent them to-day? I belong to the Farmers' League.
11676. Were you sent as a representative? Mr. Canny was sent as the representative.
11677. You say you favour close settlement? I do.

11679. Do you know of any land that is available for such a purpose in this district? The cane land on the Herbert River is not opened yet. There are thousands of acres of land, better than what is now under cultivation, to be put under cultivation. T. Townson.
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11680. Is it privately-owned land or Crown lands? Both. Some of our best land up here, and no distance away, has still to be opened up.
11681. Do you think that the district has a bad name, and that is why white men do not come here? Yes.
11682. Do you not think that the men who come here will alter that to some extent? I am sure they will. If we get the class of labour that is now coming it will be a good thing for the district.
11683. You say the men should be brought here—Who do you think should bring them for you? If the men about tell the men down South how things are here, they would come themselves.
11684. You think it only wants advertising? I do.

WILLIAM CANNY, President of the Herbert River Farmers' League, examined:

11685. By the Chairman: How many farmers are there in your league? About 140. W. Canny.
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11686. Has it been long in existence? It was in existence many years before it formed itself into a league. There are five farmers' associations, consisting of farmers scattered all over the place, and all the associations from Halifax, Macknade, Victoria, Stone River, and Fairford formed themselves into a league. We appointed an executive, to consist of delegates from each association.
11687. Your league has had a meeting in view of this Commission, and you have been appointed to attend here? Yes.
11688. Are you a farmer? Yes.
11689. What is the area of your farm? I am going to harvest 170 acres of cane this year.
11690. Do you harvest with black or white labour? Black labour.
11691. Are you registered now? No.
11692. You feel perfectly safe as regards labour this year? Yes.
11693. Have you indentured kanakas in your employ? Yes; under agreement.
11694. That is the reason why you have not registered? Not altogether. It was one of the causes. The principal cause was that I was frightened we would not obtain enough white labour to do the harvesting.
11695. What has been your experience in past years about the floating labour that comes through the district? I have been here for twenty-four years, and my experience is that the labour required is always obtainable. The principal labour required outside skilled labour in the mills has been that of ploughmen. Nearly the whole of the field work has been done by kanakas.
11696. You could always get plenty of ploughmen? Yes.
11697. You see the labour that is about the district? Yes.
11698. Is there much idle labour about? No. With the exception of the labour that has come up within the last few weeks, we have had no idle labour here at all.
11699. Mr. Johnson was spoken of as having introduced six labourers here lately; do you know anyone else that has gone South for labourers? No. I may mention that I had a letter from Mount Morgan about a week or ten days ago from a party of eight men, saying that they were told to write to me, asking if I could give them employment at my farm, and I replied saying I regretted I could not do so as I had labour for the season. As the Colonial Sugar Refining Company are going to help the farmers to harvest their cane this year and engage gangs of white men, I sent the letter to Mr. Forrest, the manager of the Victoria mill. I received a reply from Mr. Forrest, stating that the company would deal with the matter at once.
11700. Have you any special matter which you wish to bring under our notice? I have. I have been making inquiries about the total area under cane in the district. Of course, I have read the evidence given before the Commission along the coast, and I notice that the whole of the evidence seemed to be regarding the price of harvesting for this coming year. If there is not plenty of labour forthcoming for cultivation, then there will be no harvesting at all.
11701. By Mr. Paget: You are mistaken about that being the only evidence taken, as we went into the whole question? That was what I read in the paper.
11702. The evidence is not published fully in the papers, and I can assure you that our inquiry covers the whole of the labour necessary for the operations in the cane-fields? With regard to the kanakas, 99 per cent. of the farmers look on the kanaka question as done and finished with, and they would rather employ white labour; but the great difficulty will be the white labour coming here. If we only employ white labour at cane-cutting, where will we get the labour to do the cultivation?
11703. By the Chairman: What wages are you giving for ordinary fieldwork in the slack season? I give £1 a week and rations.
11704. Do you think you would have difficulty in getting men at those rates if it were known you would employ them? I am afraid there would be. There are a great many skilled kanakas left to do portion of the work.
11705. By Mr. Paget: Have you any idea as to the number of kanakas that are still employed in this district? A great many have left. I think there were 700 or 800 employed last year. In this part of the district I think there are three or four farmers who are still employing them for the harvesting.
11706. By the Chairman: Would the farmers here engage men for a term of three or six months during the slack season? I think so. That is the only hope for the future.
11707. If it were advertised in the South that work was available on such terms, do you think men would come and take the work? I do not know, but two or three railways may be constructed at an early date, and most men would rather work at navvying.
11708. But could many of the men who could work for you work at navvying? I think a man who can work on a farm can undertake navvying.
11709. A man might do chipping and work of that sort, but he might not be capable of doing pick and shovel work? Certainly.
11710. By Mr. Paget: What is the total area under cane in the district? I wrote to the managers of Victoria, Macknade, and Ripple Creek mills asking if they would let me know the area which supplied each of them with cane, and the aggregate area is 14,200 acres. Working it out on the basis upon which

W. Cannry. I have always done my work, of 10 acres to a man for both cultivation and harvesting, that would mean a total of about 1,400 men for the district. Under the new conditions of farming we shall have to go in for intense cultivation. The number I mention is exclusive of the men employed in the mills.

18 May, 1906. 11711. Can you give us a rough estimate of the number of men who have hitherto been employed in the district? At present I am employing eighteen kanakas and three ploughmen.

11712. So that practically you are employing one white man to 60 acres of cane? I have bought 70 acres within the last few months, so that I am employing one white man for 100 acres of cane.

11713. By Mr. Nielson: Did you have eighteen kanakas previously for 100 acres of cane? No. Of course all the cultivation is done just now with the exception of getting ready for the planting, but at the end of the season there will be more work.

11714. By Mr. Paget: Then hitherto there have been one-third of the number of white men employed in the district who will be required in the future according to the figures you have given us, so that it will be necessary to bring 1,000 men into the district under the new conditions? I estimate the number at 800 or 900 men.

11715. By the Chairman: That is in addition to the extra labour that is required for the harvesting? Yes. I take it that there will be 700 men required for the cultivation and 700 men for the harvesting when the kanakas are all gone.

11716. By Mr. Paget: Then you think that 1,400 men will find work here permanently? I should think that work can be found for all of them, because many can be employed at trashing, cutting firewood, and clearing. The work on the farms must be done more carefully and intensely than it has been done hitherto.

11717. By Mr. Nielson: Some of the work looks as if it had not been done at all this year? That is so. For the past four years several farmers have harvested their cane with white labour.

11718. By Mr. Paget: Do you think there will be any difficulty in supplying the additional labour that will be required after 1st January next? I fear there will be a difficulty.

11719. How do you propose to make up the deficiency? Action was taken by the Farmers' League some time ago. A petition was sent to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, pointing out the great danger and risk the sugar industry runs when the kanakas are removed, and applying to have the Immigration Restriction Act amended to allow labour to be introduced from Great Britain and Europe.

11720. By Mr. Nielson: Do you not know that it had already been amended? Not before our petition went in.

11721. Your petition did not go in until this year? We sent one petition down immediately after the federal members visited the North. Some time after that Mr. Morgan, the State Premier, said, when somebody spoke to him about the introduction of labour for the North, that he did not know anything about it, as nobody had approached him. So at a meeting of the Farmers' League I moved that a petition be sent to him.

11722. By Mr. Paget: Has your league taken any steps to obtain labour in the South? Yes. We heard that last year the Colonial Sugar Refining Company harvested 50,000 tons of cane in the Chidlers district, and the league immediately wrote to the general manager, through the manager here, asking the company to assist the farmers here in the same way. At first we got a reply that the company could not do it, but later a satisfactory reply was sent to say that they were prepared to introduce labour, and action is now being taken.

11723. By the Chairman: Have you any experience of Italian labour? Yes. There are some Italian farmers and labourers here, and they are really first-class men.

11724. By Mr. Paget: Have you ever come across any Finns? There are a few here. I believe they are the most marvellous labourers in the district. But before any labour is introduced from the Continent I think a trial should be given to labour from the British Isles.

11725. I presume that, in approaching the Federal Prime Minister and the State Premier, your association had no idea of introducing labour at wages that were lower than current rates? No; of course always allowing that novichums are not as capable of doing the work as men who are seasoned. So far as I know, there is no intention of introducing cheap labour. We want reliable labour, and are prepared to give good wages and rations.

RALPH GONSCHALI JOHNSON, Commission Agent and Cane Farmer and Contractor, examined:

R. G. 11726. By the Chairman: What are you? I am a commission agent, but I am also engaged in agricultural pursuits.

18 May, 1906. 11727. Are you canegrowing? I am preparing the land for cane. I have not got ready for cutting this year.

11728. Have you registered for the bonus? Not yet, but I am doing so in the course of a few months, before planting.

11729. You are going to employ white labour? Yes.

11730. How long have you lived up here? I have known this district intimately since 1894.

11731. You are fairly conversant with the conditions under which white labour has been got? Yes. I had another farm last year which I sold with the cultivation on it.

11732. Did you cultivate with white labour? Partly white and partly aboriginal labour.

11733. Was the white labour satisfactory? Yes.

11734. What number did you employ? From three to five white men.

11735. You had no difficulty in getting useful men? No difficulty whatever.

11736. With regard to intemperance, do you have much trouble with intemperate men? Not with the men I had; but that is the serious trouble with the men in this part of the country. There exists amongst a certain percentage of the men, and they give labour generally a bad name. That is the class that causes all the trouble.

11737. By Mr. Paget: Owing to their unreliability? Yes. They work a few days or a few weeks and do not turn up again.

11738. By the Chairman: We have heard a lot about "wasters"—Have you found any about here? There are a few of them; but I think the name is applied through the men drinking when they get their salaries or wages.

11739. By Mr. Paget: What about these 300 men who applied to you? That is a matter I have some interest in. I have taken a contract for cutting from 6,000 to 7,000 tons of cane.

11740. *By the Chairman:* With white labour? Yes.

11741. What arrangements are you making to get white labour to cut it? I secured a few reliable men in the district whom I happened to know, and, having been to Brisbane, and having a brother there, I wrote to him asking him to secure fifteen reliable men for me. He advertised for men in Brisbane, and he received 300 applications.

11742. And out of that number how many did he select? Twenty. I got five for another farmer, and then I got five more for a third farmer.

11743. How many did you keep for yourself? I got fifteen for myself and ten for the other two farmers.

11744. Your brother had no trouble in getting those men? None whatever.

11745. How long have they been with you? Six came up last Monday, and I have just this minute received a telegram stating that the others will be here at the end of next week.

11746. Do the men you have got shape well? They are apparently most reliable men.

11747. They are farm labourers? Yes; and a very high class of men.

11748. *By Mr. Paget:* Were those men residents of Brisbane? No; they came from the agricultural districts round Brisbane. Some had previous experience in cane-cutting. An agency in Brisbane has notified me that if there are any more cane-cutters required here they can procure them in Brisbane.

11749. *By the Chairman:* They have no doubt about the supply of men? No.

11750. What arrangements did you make about paying the fares up here? They paid their own fares, though I was prepared to pay their fares for them.

11751. In some cases the farmers would pay the fares of the men they brought up here? Yes.

11752. Would they expect the men to repay them out of their wages? Yes; I think they would expect them to repay their fares out of their wages. They would probably engage the men for six months. I have engaged mine for seven months. I forgot to mention that I was asked by the 'Stone River Farmers' Association to appear here and give evidence.

11753. *By Mr. Paget:* Will you tell us at what wages you engaged those men? When I wrote I said I would give them 30s. a week and found for seven months for cane-cutting, and I would find them some casual labour in the meantime.

11754. *By the Chairman:* They agreed to accept that? They all signed agreements for seven months before they left Brisbane. Two of them are married men, and they asked me what were their prospects of settling in the district.

11755. What answer were you able to make them? I told them I thought they would have no difficulty in obtaining farms for themselves after being here for a season or so.

11756. *By Mr. Paget:* Are there not a number of selections on the Seymour River which could be taken up? No; there is no good land there. You probably refer to the Stone River, but all the good land there is taken up.

11757. There is some good land on one of the rivers? There was some land taken up for close settlement years ago. There was a large area taken up thirty years ago and it is now owned by the Lanercost Sugar Company. Some of it is the finest land in the district.

11758. *By the Chairman:* What is it being used for? Nothing at present. It is lying idle. It has been offered to the Queensland Government at 10s. an acre. It includes some of the finest land we have in the district.

11759. What place is it near? It is within a mile of the present Stone River tramway, and a branch line from there would open up a very large area of country.

11760. *By Mr. Nidson:* How many acres are there? You could open up 5,000 or 6,000 acres of good land there.

11761. *By Mr. Paget:* I suppose these people originally paid £1 an acre for it? I dare say they did thirty years ago. It requires a tramway into the country to open it up.

11762. *By the Chairman:* What distance is it, in view of settling men on it? There is cane growing within a few hundred yards of it, which is supplied to the Victoria mill, and if it were purchased by the Government, it could be cut up into the areas required by these men. They could have a few acres of land for themselves, and form the cane-cutting gangs in the crushing season.

11763. Is there any other subject on which you would like to address us? I would like to see the Commission record that it is the wish of the farmers of this district that the bonus should be continued.

11764. The farmers cannot get on and employ white labour without the bonus? I do not think so. That is a very big help. As regards labour, I am quite with the previous witness as to getting labour from the British Isles, if possible, otherwise I recommend the Finns. That is the best class of labour I know in the district outside our own people.

11765. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you any experience of the working of a labour bureau? In Brisbane?

11766. No; here in Ingham; is there not a labour bureau here? I never heard of it. There is no branch here to my knowledge. When Mr. Kidston was here he promised to arrange with the late police magistrate that if anyone required labour, and let him know, he would assist them, but beyond that nothing transpired.

11767. The suggestion is that the establishment of a bureau for the registration of both employees and employers would be a good thing? It would be a splendid thing.

DAVID GREENHILL SCOTT, Cane Farmer, examined:

11768. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your farm? The whole farm is 360 acres.

11769. How much have you under cane? I have 180½ acres under cane at present.

11770. Is it registered? Yes; I registered it this year.

11771. Are you employing white labour at present? Yes; two men.

11772. What are you paying them? Equivalent to 25s. a week.

11773. What do you mean by equivalent? I am paying them 22s. 6d. a week and found, and if they stop till Christmas I will give them a bonus of half-a-crown a week. That is what I pay the ploughman.

11774. And what do you pay the other man? I pay him 22s. 6d. a week, but he is not a ploughman. He does ordinary farm work.

11775. You have their food cooked for them? Yes.

R. G.
Johnson.

18 May, 1906.

D. G. Scott.

18 May, 1906.

- D. G. Scott. 11776. What is your view of the future as regards white labour? Well, I have had to alter my opinion very considerably lately in view of what has happened in Brisbane, where to all accounts many men are offering. My experience up till the present has been that there has not been enough labour here. We have had numbers come here, but they are the wrong sort. When I say they are the wrong sort, I mean that they are men who as soon as they get their money want to go out and drink it, and of course that left us without men while they were on that racket. There are good men unquestionably, but not a great many of them come up here.
11777. *By Mr. Nielson*: There has not been much inducement, has there? I think so.
11778. For men to come to the sugar districts? Yes; in a limited number of cases. While we were employing black labour there was not that inducement.
11779. *By the Chairman*: Did the employment of black labour act as a deterrent? If a man came here while black labour was being employed and he could not get a job, he would look round and say, "I have come to the conclusion that this is no place for me." We always wanted white men as ploughmen and men to look after our horses. Probably there was not much inducement for them to come, but after Mr. Johnson's experiment there is evidently no limit to what we can get now.
11780. You never felt sanguine? I do to some extent after late events.
11781. *By Mr. Nielson*: I suppose you know that the Mossman Mill Company have engaged about 150 men in the South? Quite so. At this time of the year the weather is all that could be desired. In fact, there is no finer climate than that of North Queensland for the next three months; but it is in the torrid weather that the men we introduce will suffer from the heat, and only men of the best stamina can stand it. I have seen white men cutting during the last year or two. Some have gone right through the season, but they were men with good constitutions, and men who lived temperately. During the torrid weather the heat is very debilitating, and men who drink suffer from it.
11782. *By the Chairman*: How long have you lived here? Since 1845.
11783. Have you done any hard work? I have been working hard all the time.
11784. And still you are alive? Yes. I joined the Colonial Sugar Refining Company in 1871, and I was with them until 1903. I occupied the position of third engineer at Victoria mill, and carried on a farm, thinking that my boys would work it, which they did not do.
11785. Have you done any field work? I have been doing it for the last three years, and I have worked just as hard as any man working for me.
11786. *By Mr. Paget*: You think that at present you have nothing to fear with respect to the supply of white labour? No.
11787. Have you any fear about the future? Of course, next year there will be considerably more men needed than are needed at present, and I am inclined to think there will be a shortage of labour. A great proportion of the cane in the North will be cut this year with kanaka labour; and next year it will all have to be cut with white labour—or, at any rate, a great proportion of it will. There may be some Chinese and other coloured aliens cutting, but there will be no Pacific Islanders.
11788. How do you propose to supply the deficiency? I agree with Mr. Canny in regard to that.
11789. Do you agree generally with his views? Yes. I am secretary of the Herbert River Farmers' Association, of which he is the president.
11790. *By the Chairman*: In the event of the labour supply of the Commonwealth proving inadequate, would you favour immigration? Yes.
11791. From what source would you obtain the necessary labour? I would prefer people of our own nationality, and, failing them, Italians or Finns should be obtained.
11792. Is there anything else you would like to address us upon? I think it is necessary that the bounty should be continued. Up to the present the farmers get nothing out of the bounty. I shall be paying 1s. 3d. more than the bounty this year to cut my cane at my present contract rates.
11793. What is your contract rate? A white man has contracted to cut and haul it out for 6s. 3d. a ton.
11794. What is the weight of the crop? I anticipate about 2,000 tons from three fields, one of which will average from 40 to 45 tons per acre, another about 35 tons, and the third about 20 tons to the acre.
11795. *By Mr. Paget*: The average is about 30 tons to the acre? Yes.

ANTONI ANZOLIN, Cane Farmer, examined:

- A. Anzolin. 11796. *By the Chairman*: You are a cane farmer? Yes.
11797. And you are an Italian? Yes.
11798. *By Mr. Paget*: From what part of Italy do you come? From Venetia.
11799. *By the Chairman*: How long have you been in Queensland? Fourteen years.
11800. How long have you been engaged in farming here? Eight years.
11801. What is the area of your farm? 81 acres.
11802. How much is under cane? About 60 acres.
11803. Is it registered for the bonus? Yes; I was the first registered grower on the river.
11804. What is your experience of white labour? The white labourer is one of the best labourers we have in Queensland. We can do better with white labourers than with black.
11805. You are not confusing yourself to men of your own race when you say that? No; I speak of white labour in general.
11806. Have you any difficulty in getting suitable men? None whatever.
11807. Do you find an undue proportion of intemperate men amongst them? They are all good reliable men.
11808. What are the prospects with regard to white labour next year? If the farmers were to treat the white men better than they do, we would get plenty of white men in the district, but they are not treated as white men.
11809. Do you speak with regard to their food or their housing? The farmers do not give them proper tucker. I have seen plenty of them provided with food cooked by an aboriginal gin, and that is not fair to white men.
11810. You think that men should be provided with good food, properly cooked and served, and that they should be comfortably housed? Yes.
11811. That would go a long way to make them contented? They get disgusted with the way they are treated.

11812. In the event of labour becoming scarce in the Commonwealth, would it be possible to obtain A. Anzolin.
suitable men from your country? It all depends upon the help that is given in regard to their fares.
We could get them easily enough; but I would prefer to try to get men of some other nationality before 18 May, 1906.
going to my country. I came here as an immigrant fourteen years ago, and I can give you a good account
of the immigrants who were brought here by Mr. Fraire.
11813. The men of your nationality are inured to heat? Yes; they are all farmers.
11814. Do you think your people would come if they were offered inducements? They would come here
and would settle down.
11815. You have already told me privately that one essential condition is that they should be shipped
from Naples or Genoa? Yes, instead of having to go to London.
11816. They have not the means to go to London? No.
11817. By Mr. Paget: Have they the means to pay their own passages here? Not all.
11818. Some have? Yes. Some are coming out now on their own account, and are paying their own
passages. Italians come to Sydney by nearly every boat, and pay their own passages.
11819. By the Chairman: Do many of them come to Queensland? Some of them do, but more go to
Western Australia.
11820. They are men who would desire to settle on the land? Certainly. They would all like to settle
on the land if they could get any kind of terms.
11821. By Mr. Nielson: Do you think that sufficient inducements are being offered at present for a
large number of European workers to come to Queensland? No. There are quite enough in the country
now if they were only well treated.
11822. Do you think that the average farmer is as well off now under the new system of cane cultivation
as he was under the old system? He is better off now.
11823. Had you any experience of growing cane with black labour before you registered? Yes.
11824. And you consider you are better off now than when you employed coloured labour? Yes; a long
way better off.
11825. By Mr. Paget: That is with the bonus? Yes.
11826. By Mr. Nielson: Do you think that it is necessary for the wellbeing of the industry that the
bonus should be continued? Yes. If the industry is not nursed for another few years, it cannot be
carried on.
11827. By Mr. Paget: Without the protection of the bonus, could you pay white men the wages you
are now paying? Not unless we get better terms from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.
11828. By Mr. Nielson: But with the same money you are now getting for your cane? No.
11829. By Mr. Paget: We have to presume that the price of sugar will remain the same? We cannot
do it unless the bonus is continued.

JOHN JOHNSON, Cane Farmer, examined:

J. Johnson.

18 May, 1906.

11830. By the Chairman: What countryman are you? An Englishman.
11831. How long have you been up here. Sixteen years.
11832. What is the area of your farm? I have just sold my farm. It was 226 acres.
11833. Do you intend to continue farming? I have another farm.
11834. What is the area of that? 100 acres.
11835. You are prepared for planting? I am planting now.
11836. Are you registered? Yes.
11837. By Mr. Paget: You registered this year for the first time? I registered 30 acres of the farm
that I sold last year, and I will get the rebate on that this year.
11838. By the Chairman: Have you any difficulty in getting what white labour you want? I can get
what labour I want just at the present time.
11839. What do you think of the future when the kanakas are gone? I do not think there is enough
labour in the district just now.
11840. By Mr. Nielson: I should hope not, as they would be all starving? They would.
11841. By the Chairman: Are you sanguine that men will come to the district when they know there is
room for labour? Some of our friends tell us that they can get "whips" of labour; but I do not know
whether they can or not. I have not inquired to see if there is plenty of labour down below.
11842. You will depend on the Colonial Sugar Refining Company to provide you with cane-cutting gangs?
I have no cane to cut, but a good many are depending on the Colonial Sugar Refining Company to
supply gangs to cut the cane. Mr. R. S. Johnson had a contract for cutting my cane.
11843. What has been your experience of the class of men here—Do you get fairly decent men? Most
of the men knocking about here are pretty good men.
11844. By Mr. Paget: Is the quality of labour improving? I cannot say it is improving.
11845. Are there fewer wasters than there used to be? I think they are the same class of men as they
always were, but I do not know if there are any wasters.
11846. Amongst a large number of men you have a certain proportion who will not work? There are a
few who will not work, but they are very few.
11847. By Mr. Nielson: They would not amount to more than 2 per cent.? No; there are not many.
11848. By the Chairman: Have you any special subject on which you would like to speak? I do not
think we can grow cane and employ white labour without a bonus.
11849. In your opinion, the bonus must be continued? Yes; it must, if we are to pay the same wages
to white labour.

JAMES FREDERICK SELBY, Cane Farmer, examined:

J. F. Selby.

18 May, 1906.

11850. By the Chairman: What experience have you had in this district? I have been in the district
twenty-one years.
11851. Have you been farming all the time? No.
11852. How long have you been farming? Nine years.
11853. What is the area of your farm? The cane area is only 120 acres.
11854. Is it registered? Yes; it was registered at the commencement of the Act in 1902.
11855. You have been registered ever since? Yes.

J. F. Selby. 11856. What has been your experience of white labour during the past three or four years? I have a statement here covering four years. I will read it and you can ask me questions on it afterwards. It embodies the four years I have been working. I may state that on the Sugar Bounties Act coming into force in February, 1902, I registered the whole of my farm for white labour, and have continued under many difficulties to grow with white labour up to the present. In the first two years a large number of men came to the Herbert owing to the drought compelling the Western men to come to the coast. You will understand that in that year over 300 or 400 passed through here during the season, so we had plenty of men of a sort to pick from. Of all the farmers on this side of the Victorian mill I was the only one who was growing with white labour, so I practically had the pick of the whole gang. The first year we started with white labour four of us let the cutting of our cane out on contract. We required a gang of thirty men, and it took fully 200 men to pass through the books to supply that gang of thirty men. These men were all new to the work, they were strangers to agriculture and you could not expect it to be otherwise. At one time during the season we found it necessary to increase the gang to forty men. To show the unreliability of men: They had to pass through the town when going from one farm to the other, and out of those forty men only fifteen showed up at work the next morning. Out of the remaining twenty-six, thirteen were locked up one day and twelve the next. One of their mates, who had a sub-contract, bailed out the others, and before night he was locked up himself. That was the game throughout the season. These are facts, because I experienced them. Owing to the presence of a large number of men in the district we were able to get others, and in that way we were able to get through. The second year I cut my own cane with a small gang of eight men. Out of that number only three went right through the season.

11857. *By Mr. Paget*: Were they wages or contract men? Wages men. I cut the cane and drew it out on slides. I paid the men 7s a day and they found themselves. I had to engage twenty-nine men altogether to keep up the average of eight.

11858. Only three went right through? Yes; three men went right through. The third year there were less men available in the district. A gang took a contract for the cutting, and kept together fairly well, but they were often delayed through a number going on the drunk. That was the game all through. Last year, the fourth year, there were very few men about, far less than ever there were in previous years, and I let a contract for harvesting to a local man. That gang went through the season without much trouble. One or two of them went on the drink occasionally, but on the whole they kept together fairly well. As regards the harvesting, that is only one branch of the business. We know the cane has to be grown first, but I fancy from the reports we get from the South that the people down there think that the only thing we have to do is the harvesting, and that it does not require any labour to cultivate it at all.

11859. *By Mr. Nielson*: Some of the districts we have passed through to-day impress me with the fact that there is not much cultivation done? I find it very difficult to get men to do the ordinary work on a farm such as hoeing and other things. I have had many men refuse to undertake the routine work. They say "Give it to the kanaka. We do not mind doing the harvesting."

11860. *By the Chairman*: From what you say, the quality of labour is distinctly improving as time goes on? It is improving. Coming to the unreliability of men, I may say that last season I offered £1 per acre to weed and chip 45 acres of cane on which there was very little grass at the time. Two parties offered for the work. One party, with a man who said he had fifteen years' experience amongst cane at the head of it, offered to do the work for £50, and I accepted his offer, with the understanding that it would be finished in a month. In a fortnight that contractor threw up the job, and left his mates in the lurch. Instead of the work being done in a month it took them three months, resulting in but slight remuneration to the men, and a heavy loss to myself owing to the work being delayed. They had to pick up other men, and at the contract price it left them little more than tucker; and it meant a loss to me, as during the extra time it took the grass was growing. That made it worse for them and worse for me. The cane has to be cleaned at a certain time, and if it is not done then it is a loss to the farmer.

11861. *By Mr. Paget*: It has to be cleaned at a certain time? Yes. The work has to be done when it is needed, and unless you can get the men to go through it at the proper time it is a loss to the farmer.

11862. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think you will get many men up here who might do a fair day's work, who had no idea what it was worth from previous experience? This man who took this job last year had fifteen years' experience.

11863. What was he paying the men? I gave him £1 an acre for the work, but he took it from me at £50 for 45 acres.

11864. What did he pay? They were all share and share alike, and this man had fifteen years' experience amongst cane. That was his own price, and he knew what it was worth.

11865. *By the Chairman*: If the quality of labour is improving, are you hopeful as to the future as regards white labour? I think so.

11866. And as regards next year, how will you fare when the kanaka has gone? We shall require more men in the district. There are many other similar instances to which I think I could refer, but I think what I have told you is quite sufficient to show the difficulties we labour under, and demonstrate the unreliability of the white labour that up to the present has been available. For my own part, I see many difficulties ahead for the farmers in the cane districts until suitable men come in.

11867. *By Mr. Paget*: You do not care from whence they come? No. We would like our own nationalities best if we can get them. The only good reliable men are those who are determined to stick to the work and give up the drink. The drink traffic is the worst factor against the successful carrying out of the work in the canefields. It is commonly reported that cane-growers put all the obstacles they can in the way of white labour to discredit it, and also that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company put obstacles in the way of white farmers to prevent the carrying out of contracts. That, I say distinctly, is not true. I have gone out of my way to help the white labour, and I know the Colonial Sugar Refining Company have given every assistance to help the white gangs.

11868. *By Mr. Nielson*: You do not think the company assist them very much in finding work in the off season? I am speaking of my own farm.

11869. They do not prevent you employing white men? No.

11870. That is about as far as they have assisted you? They have done all they can to assist me, because I have been getting white labour from the start.

11871. *By Mr. Paget*: It is not true that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company have refused financial assistance to farmers who are employing white labour? Not at all. They have treated me well in every way to enable me to carry on with white labour.

J. F. Selby.

18 May, 1906.

11872. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have the Colonial Sugar Refining Company done anything themselves to encourage the employment of white men in the district? This year they have. The manager of the Victoria mill told me that if any of my men desired to remain in the district I might send them to him, and he has offered to find them work at woodcutting this year.

11873. Do the company employ any white men at woodcutting? There are a considerable number going up the river. If I remember rightly, fifteen men came up last week from Townsville. There are two gangs of white men employed. The company have been more considerate with me in connection with my white gangs than they ever were when I employed black labour. We are supposed to send in a certain quantity of cane every day to the mill. With the four white gangs I have had working for me the company have allowed me to send in almost any quantity. The year I was cutting with the wages gang we sent in anything from five to fifteen trucks a day, and the company sent me all the trucks I wanted. If I had been employing black labour, I should have had to keep up to my complement of cane every day. I have heard labour organisers and the men themselves saying that one white man can do as much work as two kanakas, and sometimes you will hear it said that he can run rings round four kanakas. They may do so in connection with other work, but not in the cane fields. My four years' experience of white labour leads me to say that the best white man can do more work in the cane fields than a kanaka, on the average.

11874. *By Mr. Paget*: You think the same number of white men will have to be employed as there are kanakas, who will have to go out of the industry? Yes. With regard to white men working in a tropical climate, I had white men from the Clarence or the Tweed working for me—men with twenty years' experience of the Northern Rivers—and one of the best of those men could not stand the heat. I have seen him fall down in the paddock with the heat. Several other men I had at the same time had to give up occasionally owing to the heat.

11875. During which months? The end of October, November, and December.

11876. That is at the end of the cutting season? Yes.

11877. *By the Chairman*: The men occasionally dropped out and had a spell? Yes, and came back again. Last season, when the hot weather came round, my men went out to work at daylight and came in at 9 o'clock. Then they went out again in the afternoon, because they said it was too hot for white men to work in the middle of the day.

11878. They adapted themselves to the peculiarities of the climate? Yes. I am not speaking in any spirit of disparagement of white men, because I am determined to go on with them, but I am just pointing out the effect of the climate upon them. So long as they got the cane cut in a certain time, they could please themselves about what part of the day they worked. In the future a smaller number of white men may be required, owing to the farmers employing more labour-saving implements.

11879. During the past have not a certain number of kanakas always been going through a probationary period? The first-year "lays" have, of course.

11880. Then you will not want one white man to represent everyone of them? The white men have to learn the work, too, and some of them take a lot of teaching. I think you can take it that we shall require one white man for one kanaka, unless we can get men from the South who have been cane-cutting all their lives.

11881. How long will it take men to learn to cut cane? I have seen men who could not learn it in a season, whilst others can learn it in a week. With reference to the difference in the price of white and black labour, we require the bonus to enable us to carry on with white labour. The average cost per day of the work of the farm with kanaka labour was 2s. 6d., and with white labour at least 5s. a day and found. In the work of harvesting, cane can be delivered on the main line at from 2s. to 3s. per ton, while the cost with white men is from 5s. to 7s. 6d. a ton, and in some cases even more. For every £1 paid for coloured labour about £2 2s. 6d. has to be paid for white labour. Those figures show the necessity for the continuance of the bonus of 6s. a ton, or a very high protective tariff.

11882. *By Mr. Paget*: It will be 7s. 6d. next year? Yes; but I am taking the average. Without the bonus, the industry must come down if carried on solely with white labour.

11883. I presume you are aware that the increased bonus next year carries with it an increased excise of £1 per ton, which will lower the price of your cane by £1 per ton of sugar? Yes; it will lower the price of cane by 2s. 6d. a ton, so that our bonus will really be the same as it is now. I prefer white men if they will do the work, and if the country is prepared to pay the price to enable us to carry on with white labour. In regard to the intemperate habits of the men, I think the Federal Parliament should pass a law prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors in the sugar districts.

11884. Are you a member of a temperance association? I am a total abstainer, but it is not for that reason I make the suggestion. No matter how good the men may be that you bring into the district, they are liable to take to drink, because cane-cutting is a very thirsty job. Those who bring men here should insist upon getting temperate men, otherwise they will not get through the work. Drink has been the failing of a large number of men in the past. Some say it is only the wasters who drink, but you will find, when travelling through Australia, that a lot of wasters are men who do not want to work, and that some of the very best workers are most intemperate.

11885. Are you satisfied with the price for cutting cane? I think so—35s. a week and found.

11886. The contract price varies according to the weight of the crops? During my time they have varied from 4s. to 6s. 6d. a ton, according to the weight of the crop, the cane to be delivered on the main line.

CHARLES TRENT, Secretary of the Herbert River Sugar Workers' Union, examined:

11887. *By the Chairman*: What are you? Secretary of the Herbert River Sugar Workers' Union.

C. Trent.

11888. What is the number of members in your union? 126 at the present time.

11889. Are they all financial members of the union? Yes.

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11890. On what subject do you wish to give evidence? Well, I was asked to represent the Sugar Workers' Union. The objects of the union are contained in a few words.

11891. *By Mr. Nielson*: It is the same as the Cairns Union? Yes; with this difference: that we are in favour of establishing a free labour bureau in connection with our union.

- C. Trent. 11892. *By Mr. Paget*: Not a Government bureau? It would be advisable to have a Government labour bureau, but it would be just as well for us to have a free one where we could obtain employment.
- 18 May, 1906. 11893. Is there anything really that stands in the way of your union forming a bureau for the registration of labour and registration of employers? Nothing at all.
11894. You desire to do that if possible? Yes. We have had no applications for men at all.
11895. *By the Chairman*: None at all? One farmer sent in for two men on one occasion and they were supplied the next morning. Men come and ask me day after day if there is anything for them to do, but I cannot find them work at the present time.
11896. *By Mr. Paget*: Has your union had any conference with the Farmers' Association as to the rates of pay or rates of contract work for the coming season? Some short time back we requested the Farmers' League to grant a conference to decide on the rate of wages for the district. They wrote back refusing to grant the conference as the minimum wage did not apply to this year's crop.
11897. The minimum wage? The standard rate; and they refused to agree to a conference.
11898. What was the standard wage? We proposed a minimum wage for the district in our letter.
11899. *By the Chairman*: What did you propose it should be? We were going to decide that at the conference.
11900. *By Mr. Paget*: You did not submit a minimum wage? No. The farmers submitted a wage through the papers, and did not consult anyone else. It was then that we wrote asking for the conference, and they refused to grant it.
11901. *By the Chairman*: What wage did they suggest through the papers? If I recollect rightly, it was £1 a week and found up to 25s. a week and found.
11902. *By Mr. Paget*: Were they the off-season wages—that is, the ordinary cultivation wages? This was the wage they proposed for the whole season. I took it that they were the wages for the coming crushing season.
11903. Not for cane-cutting? No; for the agricultural work other than cane-cutting.
11904. *By the Chairman*: You did not understand that to include ploughmen? Yes; the 25s. a week would be for the ploughmen.
11905. *By Mr. Paget*: What was the wage fixed for youths? Youths were quoted at from 12s. to 15s. a week. I have not a copy of the paper with me now, but I read it through, and, as near as I can recollect, those were the figures which I have given you.
11906. *By the Chairman*: Were the harvesting wages given by the farmers? That I cannot say. I read it through, but I did not make a note of it. I believe, though, it was 30s. a week for harvesting.
11907. What wages do your union propose to suggest to the farmers? We propose to suggest that the wages during the slack season should be 27s. 6d. a week and found, no wet days stopped, or 6s. 8d. a day and find themselves.
11908. *By Mr. Paget*: What number of hours a week? Forty-eight hours a week—that is, eight hours a day.
11909. *By the Chairman*: Does your union know of any agricultural country in the world where agricultural labourers only work forty-eight hours a week? I only work forty-eight hours a week for a farmer myself.
11910. How long have you been working those hours? Two months.
11911. *By Mr. Paget*: What wages do you get? 22s. 6d. a week for planting.
11912. *By the Chairman*: For working forty-eight hours a week? Yes.
11913. *By Mr. Paget*: What are the wages during the crushing season? 30s. a week and found, or 7s. a day and find themselves.
11914. *By the Chairman*: For forty-eight hours a week? Yes; forty-eight hours a week.
11915. Any suggestion about overtime? No.
11916. Do you know of any country in the world where in harvesting operations they only work the same hours as in any other part of the year? I cannot say that I do.
11917. Well? There is a scale which we proposed to offer to the farmers for cane-cutting by contract. I have it here.
11918. You might let us have it? For a 15-ton crop or over, 5s. per ton.
11919. *By Mr. Paget*: Trashed or untrashed? The prices I quote are for trashed cane.
11920. What do you propose to do for loading—Do you put it on the tram trucks? Yes.
11921. You take the tram trucks into the field? Yes.
11922. And you put them back on the main line? Yes. For a 12 to 15 ton crop, the price we suggest is 5s. 9d. per ton; for a 10 to 12 ton crop, 6s. per ton; for a crop of 8 to 10 tons, 6s. 6d. per ton; for crops under 8 tons, 8s. per ton. For untrashed cane, the price will be 6d. extra per ton.
11923. Does your union suggest any contract price for trashing cane? No; they do not.
11924. Or at per acre? No. They do not suggest any price for trashing cane at all.
11925. It has been suggested to this Commission, in other places, that perhaps a system of references might be of service in the sugar industry; what do you think about that? I am afraid it would not work.
11926. Has your union discussed it as a matter of policy? No. That was just my own private opinion I was giving you. The union has not discussed the question at all.
11927. You think it would not work? No, it would not.
11928. Would you mind saying why? The Shearers' Union have a system of references, but references are not produced once in a dozen times in applying for work.
11929. Are you aware of that from your own knowledge? Yes; I know that is a fact.
11930. Well, now, it has also been suggested, in order to fix these men who are walking the country in homes of their own, that some system of workers' homes might be instituted—do you approve of that system? I do.
11931. Would your union approve of it? They have not discussed it.
11932. Do you not think the matter worthy of your serious consideration? I do. I think the establishment of homes such as that would keep a lot of men in the district who would otherwise go away.
11933. And give them an interest in the district? Yes.
11934. What area do you think would be suitable for a fairly good man to make a home there and have his labour available in the sugar season? I would suggest 15 acres.

11935. And at what distance do you think these homesteads could be from the sugar districts in your own district? Well, one witness, Mr. Johnson, said there was some of the Lanercost land. That is 7 miles from here.

C. Trent.
18 May, 1906.

11936. Can you say how many men are unemployed in the district? I cannot.

11937. There are so few? No; there are a good few. Whenever I come into town four or five men generally ask me for work; but I cannot get them work, because the farmers do not apply to us for men. If they did, we could recommend men.

11938. But there is not a large number of unemployed? No.

11939. And those who are out of employment at present you expect will be placed as soon as the crushing season commences? Yes.

11941. I suppose this is not a district through which large numbers of unemployed pass? There is a fairly large number who come up this way from Townsville. Sometimes they go round by Kangaroo Hills and up to Geraldton. At other times they are on their way from the North to Townsville.

11941. We were told the other day by a witness at Geraldton that 6,000 men pass through that place during the off season—Do you think that there is that number of men in this district? I do not think those figures are correct.

11942. Have you been living in the district for many years? I have only been here for the last fourteen months.

11943. Have you any experience of the labour supply in other parts of the State? Only with regard to the shearing districts in the West.

11944. Did you come from the West? Yes.

11945. Where were you working in the West? Around Blackall, Barcardine, and Alice Downs.

11946. Do you think that, with the improved conditions in the West, there will be a very large surplusage of labour there next year to come down to the sugar districts in search of work? I do not see that many have come down from the West.

11947. Large numbers came in 1902 and 1903, during the drought? There is always plenty surplus labour in the West, and I think that, if the conditions were improved here in regard to accommodation and food, men would come from the West and would remain here.

11948. Provided that the Western worker could make as much money in the cattle fields as he can out West, you think he would remain here rather than return to the West? I think he would.

11949. By the Chairman: How many years did you live in the West? I was there for ten months.

11950. You did not live there long enough to get the hunger for the West that Western men get? That is quite true; but, with the improved conditions, I think men could be induced to come here and to remain.

11951. By Mr. Nielson: Do you think that the establishment of Government Labour Bureaus in the various populous centres would be an assistance to the workers? It would be of great assistance.

11952. It is only in the absence of such a bureau that you propose to run one in connection with the union? Yes.

11953. Do you correspond with other Sugar Workers' Unions in Queensland? Yes.

11954. Do you interchange statistics as to the work that is available and the men who are available? Yes. Regular reports are interchanged with the different branches as far South as Mackay. We have not exchanged any reports with Bundaberg yet.

11955. We have heard a great deal as to the intemperance of the white workers? I was at Victoria mill as timekeeper, and out of 135 white men engaged in the mill there were only three who were dismissed through drink throughout the season.

11956. By Mr. Paget: Can you tell us how many lost time through intemperance? There were very few. I had to see whether the men were at work or not, and I had no trouble in finding them at their work every day.

11957. Can you say how many men passed through the books? About 340. I think 80 per cent. of the men who started finished the season.

11958. Why did the others leave? The large majority of them left on account of the number of hours they had to work and the food supplied to them.

11959. By the Chairman: What were the hours? Day jobs were from 6 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., with half an hour for breakfast in some cases, and in others no time at all. They had to get their breakfast before they started in the morning.

11960. Was there any "crib" at 11 o'clock? No.

11961. What time did they have for dinner? Centrifugal men got three-quarters of an hour, and the other men an hour. There was no intermission from dinner time till knocking off time.

11962. What about the food? Well, the food was not fit for a man to work on. They cannot work on the food supplied to them.

11963. By Mr. Paget: You are saying this from your own knowledge? Yes. I worked for them and lived in the barracks with the men.

11964. By the Chairman: At the Victoria mill? Yes.

11965. Was there a cook supplied? Yes.

11966. What was the accommodation like? The accommodation was very poor.

11967. Are you speaking of last year? I went there for work and I was put—if I remember rightly—in a room of about 27 feet by 12 feet. In that room there were eight of us.

11968. Were the bunks in tiers, or what? There were two tiers there. Along the wall was a small space for walking through.

11969. By Mr. Paget: Stretchers, I suppose? Yes.

11970. By the Chairman: You have not been there lately? No.

11971. There has been an Act passed since that regulates all that? Yes.

11972. By Mr. Paget: I may say I am astonished to hear you give this evidence about the accommodation and food at Victoria mill, because I had the opportunity given me of seeing the whole of the Hambleton mill quarters last Saturday morning, and I know the men there are excellently housed, and they seem to be very well fed? That may be so.

11973. It is the same company as own the Victoria mill, and this accommodation was put up before any Act was passed? There is no doubt there is a difference between the two places, and different scales of

- C. Trent.
18 May, 1906. rations are supplied to the men. I have known men come from Hambledon, and they said they were fed very well.
11974. There is excellent bathroom and latrine accommodation, most excellently planned, and it has been there for years? The same applies to Macknade. Last year they put in new accommodation. Before that the accommodation was disgraceful. The Victoria mill has started to put up new accommodation since the Act has come into force.
11975. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is there anything in the rules of your union to enable you to expel any member? Yes. Any member we do not desire as a member, we have a rule which enables us to refuse to admit him.
11976. But can you expel him once he gets in? Yes. We work to some extent on the same lines as the Cairns constitution at present. In considering the hours of labour I omitted to mention that boys, fifteen to seventeen years of age, are working on the locomotives for 10s. a week for fifteen to seventeen hours a day.
11977. *By the Chairman:* What are they—cleaners? No; stokers.
11978. *By Mr. Paget:* Are they lad learners? You cannot term them lad learners.
11979. Just the same as in the Railway Department? No; I do not think they are.

GEORGE WATSON, Shearer and Labourer, examined:

- G. Watson.
18 May, 1906. 11980. *By the Chairman:* What are you? I generally follow shearing, but have not done any since the drought.
11981. Are you doing labouring work at present? Yes.
11982. Are you in employment? Not just at present. I have just finished cutting a certain amount of wood for the Victoria Company.
11983. *By Mr. Paget:* You are not one of the unemployed? No, I can generally get something to do.
11984. *By the Chairman:* On what subject do you wish to be heard? I want to give you a little of our experience. I went through the cane-cutting season last year, and I have a contract to cut something like 2,000 or 3,000 tons of cane this year.
11985. On what subject do you wish to address us? We started here last year with eleven men, and we cut 2,300 tons odd of cane.
11986. *By Mr. Paget:* Was it a gang working on the share-and-share-alike principle? Not exactly last year. I was foreman of that gang, and another man had the contract, and, of course, we were sweated for something like 8d. per ton, and 9d. in some cases. It took us from the 1st of June till the 23rd of December, and during that time we were six weeks trashing. The trashing was done first. Now, I want to show you, gentlemen, that there were not many unreliable men in our gang. There were only three fresh men put on, and they were put on as emergency men while others were sick; or rather, two had to go to the hospital for a certain time, and one of them—the cook—was discharged for intemperance. We had a clause in our agreement that, if a man could not do his work through drink, he would be fined 10s. for the first offence, £1 for the second offence, and for the third offence he would be discharged.
11987. Did the fines go to the hospital? As it happened, we had no fines to send anywhere. There was nothing coming to the cook that we discharged. We never got his fine at all. We lost it altogether, because he ran into the books too far.
11988. Might I ask where these men came from? Some from Townsville, some from the South—I came from the South myself—and there is one living here locally.
11989. They did not come from the West? They were all new men. Seven out of the eleven never cut cane in their lives before. I think you will get evidence to-morrow to show you that we gave satisfaction right through. I do not think there is such a great deal in learning how to cut sugar-cane. So long as a man is willing to work it will not take him long to find out how to cut sugar-cane.
11990. *By the Chairman:* What is your next point? One of the witnesses just now said that the white men could not stand the heat here.
11991. What do you say? I say they can stand it. I was one of those men whom the witness was referring to. When it got extremely hot just before Christmas, we used to get up at 4.30 a.m. and load on trucks before breakfast. That is the principal part of the work and the heaviest part. When we finished that we came home to breakfast, and then went back into the field and worked till 10 a.m. We then knocked off and had a spell till 2 p.m. We then went back again and worked as long as we could see. In that way we overcame the difficulty. If a man can keep out of the heat he has a right to do so. We put up the quantity of trucks we were supposed to put up.
11992. *By Mr. Paget:* As the summer got on, and you found the work was getting laborious owing to the excessive heat, you worked early and late and not during the very hottest portion of the day? Yes; and we kept out of the heat as much as possible.
11993. *By Mr. Nielson:* They do that in every hot country in the world—knock off in the middle of the day? Yes. We had some very bad cane to cut last year. The wages are something similar to the scale of wages you have just taken for cutting and loading.
11994. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you generally agree with what Mr. Trent said respecting the rates of wages that you think should be paid? Yes; I fully agree with that.
11995. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think that sufficient men will be got to go through the harvest at 30s. a week and found? Yes.
11996. You think that is sufficient inducement for men to come up here? I have had applications myself from men in the South to come up here. I would not send for them because I could not tell them the rate of wages they would get when they came here.
11997. *By the Chairman:* When you say South, do you mean Queensland? I mean south of Brisbane. Around Toowoomba and the Darling Downs and that district.
11998. *By Mr. Paget:* And the Northern Rivers of New South Wales? No.
11999. *By the Chairman:* You have had applications from men on the Darling Downs? Yes. I would have taken more cane if I had known they would come, but I did not know in time.
12000. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you engaged men on weekly wages for the contract you have taken for this year? No; we all share alike.
12001. *By the Chairman:* Do you know what the Colonial Sugar Refining Company are offering their gangs for cutting cane? No. I know there are five or six gangs, and we had no difficulty in

filling them up. When I came here fourteen months ago, in the slack season, I got a job at once at chipping at 30s. a week and find myself. Very often the wet season commences just after Christmas and for my first week's work I took 7s. 6d. The next week I got in two days, and out of the eight or nine weeks I was there the best week's wages I got were 25s. The farmers stop all wet days, and in many instances they tell the men they cannot afford to keep them, and they have to travel on. Well, if they want reliable men, they must find some employment for them during the slack season.

G. Watson.
18 May, 1906.

12002. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are you a member of the Sugar Workers' Union? I am not, though I am in sympathy with them. I am a member of two unions.

12003. *By Mr. Paget*: If it should be wet for three weeks on end, how would you manage then? I would not expect to get paid. I have never done much day work. I think the sugar industry will have to be worked by unions on the same principle as the shearing. I never went about the country looking for shearing. I always sent my £1, and if it was a shed I was not known at, I forwarded my references with my £1. If I am accepted, they let me know. If not, they return both my £1 and my references, and say they are full-handed.

12004. *By the Chairman*: You think the sugar industry should be carried on on the same principle? Certainly. Then a man down at Brisbane, or on the other side of Brisbane, knows the rate of wages and where to go.

12005. That would necessitate a system of references? Certainly.

12006. You do not raise any objection to that? No.

12007. Do rouseabouts get references? Yes.

12008. *By Mr. Nielson*: How long were you shearing? About twenty years.

12009. How does shearing compare with cane-cutting? I would sooner be amongst the wool so far as money is concerned.

12010. But so far as hard work is concerned, which is the harder? I think, if anything, the sugar is the worse because you are out in the sun; but I never felt exhausted at the cane-cutting.

12011. *By the Chairman*: Did you ever do any tank-sinking? Yes. That is very warm work getting on towards Christmas when you get down 12 feet or 14 feet and will beat the sugarcane so far as work is concerned.

12012. *By Mr. Paget*: What price is being given for corwood cutting by contract? I get 5s. a cord at the stump.

12013. Is it forest or scrub wood? Forest wood.

JAMES FREDERICK SELBY, further examined:

12014. *By the Chairman*: On what subject do you wish to be further heard? With regard to the wages J. F. Selby. and also about the Western men. I have been in the habit of paying 5s. and 6s. a day, the men finding themselves, or £1 a week and rations. In connection with the statement of the last witness about 18 May, 1906. payment for wet weather, from 10th February until the end of April this year I was not able to do any work at all on my farm. It would not be fair to expect me to pay a man wages for three months when there was no work for him to do.

12015. *By Mr. Nielson*: You would not keep him during that time? I could not. The labour people reckon we should keep men in the district for the whole of the off season.

12016. I think they expect to be put off in the wet season? On some farms on the high light lands men can be employed all the year round.

12017. *By the Chairman*: Do you charge your men for food if they are idle for two or three days? I am in the habit of paying them so much a week and they find themselves.

12018. In that case you allow nothing for wet days? No.

12019. What part of a day has to be wet before you call it a wet day? If it is absolutely pouring, and the men cannot get out.

12020. If they work for half or a quarter of a day do you pay them? If they go out for an hour they are paid for half a day. With regard to Western men, in my first year's experience 300 or 400 Western men applied to me for work. The majority of them said that they were driven to the coast through the drought, and they wanted to go back as soon as there was work in the West. With regard to the price, the company are offering this year to pay for cane-cutting from 3s. 6d. to 5s. 6d. per ton, with 10 per cent. added, for men remaining to the end of the season, for crops of 10 tons and upwards.

12021. *By Mr. Nielson*: That is contract work? Yes.

12022. Is that for trashed cane? No. They trash as they go along. At Childers, for cane of 10 tons and upwards, they get 2s. 3d. to 4s. a ton.

12023. Cane-cutting at Childers is much easier than here because the fields are twice as clean there? I am not aware of the character of the work—I am only comparing the prices.

(Ingham.)

SATURDAY, 19 MAY, 1906

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

ERNEST WILFRED CROW, Kaurka Storekeeper and Labour Agent, examined:

12024. *By the Chairman*: You reside in Halifax? Yes.

E. W. Crow.

12025. You are also an agent for labour vessels? Yes.

12026. You come a great deal in contact with kanakas? I do nothing else. I am amongst them every 19 May, 1906. day. It is my business.

12027. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many years have you been connected with the islanders? About fifteen years off and on. I have been five years in this district.

- E. W. Crow. 12028. Are there many unemployed kanakas in this district now? I should put the number at from 75 to 125.
- 10 May, 1906 12029. They are unemployed? Yes; and from what I can see there is no possible chance of their being employed.
12030. *By Mr. Paget*: Why is there no possible chance? Because the land has been registered for white labour. Fully two-thirds of this district is registered for the bonus, and it is therefore impossible for the kanakas to get a job.
12031. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do the "boys" in general understand that they are liable to be deported after the 31st December? Yes; they understand that.
12032. Have some of them been unemployed for any time? Some have been unemployed for five or six months.
12033. What is the reason that they have not gone home? They have lost all their money and there is no one to pay their passage-money. Then there is the irregularity in the running of the boats. The boats never give any advice as to when they are coming.
12034. *By Mr. Paget*: There was a boat at Lucinda Point just lately? Yes; it was chartered by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.
12035. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did she go away full? No. We did not know until the last moment that she wanted any "boys"; and, as the number wanted was not sufficient to delay the boat, she went away short.
12036. How many was she short? Ten.
12037. Are there many "boys" here who are agreeable to go home if facilities are provided for them to do so? Yes. So far as I know, it is not a matter of deportation at all. It is a matter of will you let them go?
12038. Are there many "boys" destitute? Yes; there are several that have no money. That is, they have no ready money. They might have some money in the bank, but they do not like drawing that until they are going home. They will never touch that money if they can help it.
12039. Are there a number of "boys" ready to go? Yes; but they are unable to get away. They sign on for six or twelve months, and if there is not a ship ready when they finish their work they have to sign on again. Then they lose heart and do not wish to go at all. The system is a cruel one, and altogether unfair to the "boys."
12040. *By Mr. Paget*: In what respect? I will give you an instance of what happened not long ago. On the 13th February last there were a lot of New Hebrides "boys" who had just come to Milifax. There were sixty of them, because I lined them up and counted them. They asked me if there was a boat ready to take them back to the islands, and I said I did not know of any boat at that time. I asked them if they had been to the inspector here, and they said that they had, but he could not tell them. I suggested that they should wire, and this is a copy of the wire they sent: "Sixty New Hebrides 'boys' here want to go home. No more money for food. When earliest will there be a ship to take us. Reply paid. Dorowarra."
12041. *By the Chairman*: What was the reply? The reply to that telegram came back as follows:—"Re your wire. Better communicate with the inspector, Brennan." I thought he was sending some instructions to the inspector, and perhaps some information, but no information came at all. So far as I could make out, the inspector here referred them back to me, and thought I might know something; but I did not. That is just a fair sample of what goes on, and what has been going on here for years.
12043. Who is the inspector here? Mr. Banbury or Mr. Troy; but it is not their fault. I cannot get the information, although I am willing to pay for it.
12044. What was the ultimate fate of those "boys"? There are six of them stranded in Maryborough. Ten of them started to go down. I lost their tickets in Townsville, and had to come back here again. The other eight got to Maryborough, but the ship sailed without them.
12045. What became of the rest? There were four or five agreement "boys" who had their passages paid for them, but others had not the money, and the employers would not pay for them. That is the reason that so many are stranded.
12046. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did some go home? I think four got home.
12047. *By the Chairman*: What became of the rest of the sixty? A great number re-engaged, but a lot of them hung about here and did not know when there was a ship. Some of them are unemployed at the present moment.
12048. *By Mr. Paget*: You said some of the islanders could not go home because the employers would not pay their passage money? Yes.
12049. Were they three-year agreement islanders or re-engagement islanders? I refer to the re-engagement ones, although the employers refused to pay the passages of the agreement "boys" until pressure was brought to bear to make them pay.
12052. *By whom?* By the Polynesian Department. They threatened to take action against the employers who refused to pay.
12053. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did you send that wire yourself to the Pacific Islanders' Office in Brisbane? Yes; and I received the answer from Mr. Brennan.
12054. *By Mr. Paget*: I would like this matter of the passage money settled up, because it is a very serious charge to make against a number of employers—You say the employers refused to pay the passages of the re-engagement "boys"? Yes.
12055. That is the excess passage down the coast to the port of shipment? Yes; the "boys" had to pay that themselves.
12056. Do you know if the employer is responsible for this extra passage money? I cannot say anything about that. I am not a solicitor or barrister, and I cannot answer that. That is a disputed matter at present. All I know is that they have not done so.
12057. Perhaps they may not be liable? I cannot say anything about that.
12058. That is what I wish you to clear up, as statements have been made which we must clear up if possible? I cannot do that, because there is a case being tried at Mackay at the present time. It seems that the barristers and solicitors engaged in the case cannot arrive at a conclusion, and I do not see how I can.
12059. You said you were agent for labour vessels? Yes; for return islanders and re-engagement "boys" generally for the plantations. I have done it for years up till last year.

E. W. Crow.

19 May, 1906.

12060. You are not acting as agent for any vessels on the berth? There is none on the berth.

12061. But in the trade? Yes.

12062. Could you not have communicated with the vessels? They were all at sea. We cannot get information about these vessels at all. It is not the fault of the officials here. It is Mr. Brennan who should supply them with that information. These "boys" want to know when there is a vessel, but they cannot find out, and they have to re-engage or else they become stranded.

12063. *By the Chairman:* If the information they got showed that they must maintain themselves until the vessel started they would not have re-engaged? They would not.

12064. *By Mr. Nielson:* It has been suggested that if some of the labour vessels started at the Northern ports to take return "boys," many of the "boys" now employed in the North would return home? Yes. That has been the fault all along; the "boys" never can get home. If the boats would only come up the coast, it would not matter whether they started from the North or the South.

12065. But they do come up here? They have only done it within the last year or two. The head office in Brisbane should notify the local officers or agents generally three weeks or a month before the departure of the ship, so that the "boys" could arrange their agreements accordingly. That has not been done, and a lot of "boys" have lost heart and have stopped on. Many of the "boys" do not want to go home at all because of that.

12066. They will not go home unless they have money to take with them? No; though one "boy" who went by the "Lady Norman" had only enough money to pay the extra passage money, and he took absolutely nothing with him.

12067. Have you ever been down in the islands? No.

12068. Are there many "boys" here who have their boxes filled ready to go? Some have, but not many. Some have had their boxes filled for three or four years, but they have not been able to get home. They have either been under agreement or they have lost their money in the meantime and cannot pay the extra passage money.

12069. You are aware that after the end of this year a large number of "boys" are liable to be sent home—Have you anything to suggest to facilitate their deportation? I would suggest that the three vessels now engaged in the trade should take as many home as they can between now and the end of the year, and then let the Government charter four or five steamers, to carry 500 or 600 each. The three vessels now in the trade can carry 450 among them, and that would enable you to ship 2,500 the first week in February. The Government agents could greatly facilitate the work of deportation by arranging, as far as possible, for a vessel to take "boys" to one or two islands only. Then they would be able to get back in four weeks to take away the remainder. In that way they might all be deported in two months, because there will not be more than 6,000 to deport, if that number.

12070. You know the "boys" are scattered over a large tract of country in Queensland—How would you collect them for shipment? When the Federal Act comes into force any man who harbours an islander will be liable to a penalty of £50.

12071. *By Mr. Paget:* That is the penalty for employing him? For harbouring him.

12072. Do you say that the word "harbouring" is used in the Act? I may be wrong. At all events, if a farmer keeps "boys" he should have to pay the extra passage money, and the Government might allow him a fair ration rate to maintain the "boys" until they are deported.

12073. Instead of keeping them in camps? That would be better than keeping them in camps. There are "boys" working illegally on the Tully and Murray Rivers in the banana gardens, and in the Atherton Scrub, and a good many other places.

12074. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think the present departmental staff would be sufficient to carry out your suggestions? No. They are not thoroughly in sympathy with the work.

12075. *By the Chairman:* Of course that is only an opinion? It is not an opinion; I have learned it from experience. I have been threatened by a Government official with being locked up when I was only doing my duty to the ship.

12076. *By Mr. Paget:* Will you look at section 9 of the Federal Act [*handing Act to witness*]? I see I was wrong; it does not say anything about harbouring.

12077. *By Mr. Nielson:* Employers might not be willing to maintain the "boys," or it might not be convenient for them to board a lot of "boys"? I do not see why they should not do it. They have the accommodation, and if they are allowed a fair ration rate, it could not be inconvenient, and a short Act of Parliament could be passed to get over the difficulty.

12078. *By the Chairman:* That would mean fresh legislation? Yes; on that point.

12079. Are most of the "boys" anxious to go home? The majority of them are. I see that Mr. Caulfeild stated in Bundaberg that, if the Tanna "boys" were deported against their will, they would most likely kill all the white men on their island. My experience of Tanna "boys" is that they are the most homesick of all the "boys." They are more clamorous to go home than any of the others.

12080. Have any of the "boys" displayed a dread of going home? No; they simply laugh at the idea; but there are a few Malaya "boys" who, I have been told by other "boys," dare not go home, as they are criminals in their own island; but there are only a few of such cases.

12081. If you sent 500 or 600 islanders down at once, do you not think there would be danger of a shortage of food? Not in the least. Since I have seen that statement made before the Commission I have asked all the "boys" I have come in contact with, and they simply laugh at the idea. They say there is plenty of food on the islands.

12082. *By Mr. Paget:* Do the islanders you have spoken to represent both the Solomon and the New Hebrides groups? Yes. When the statement was first made in the Press it had special reference to the New Hebrides, and particularly with reference to Tanna.

12083. *By the Chairman:* The evidence we have had on the subject has applied more particularly to the Solomons, and especially to Malaya? I am talking of what appeared in the Press before that. I believe it originated from self-interested parties.

12084. Who do you think is likely to have originated it? I would not say.

12085. I am not referring to individuals; but what class would be interested in stopping the "boys" from going back to their islands? There might be someone interested in extending the time for deportation.

12086. *By Mr. Paget:* Whom do you think them to be? I will not say any more on that point.

E. W. Crow. 12087. They might be the shipowners, you know, who might be desirous of extending the passages over a long time? I do not know.

19 May, 1906. 12088. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you would like to say? I am not a planter, but I know something about cane planting. Three years ago there were seven ships—and there have been as many as nine ships—engaged in the island trade. Roughly speaking, the ships and stores would be worth £5,000; they have had sixteen men on each ship engaged as agents in procuring labour, and about thirty sub-agents in Queensland. When they wanted to secure black labour they had all those men and a large amount of capital engaged in getting it; but, so far, I have not received a single application for a white man since I came here, although I am a labour agent. I may be wrong, but I think that very little endeavour has been made to secure white labour, although they knew they were likely to be short.

12089. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you refer to this district? I mean any district.

12090. *By the Chairman*: Recently they have been sending men down to New South Wales to get gangs of cane-cutters for their harvesting—Did you not know that? They might have done so.

12091. I can tell you that they have done so? A few may have done that, but what they have done is nothing in comparison with what they have done in the past to secure black labour.

12092. From your knowledge of the labour market, you think there is enough white labour in Australia to supply the place of the kanakas? Yes; I do think so.

12093. You do not think immigration will be necessary to supply the shortage? I do not know. I believe in immigration, but I do not think it will be really necessary for two or three years. If Australia goes in for a protective policy, and establishes manufactures, of course we shall want immigration, but under present conditions we do not want immigration for two or three years.

12094. You mean that a thorough attempt should be made to get the labour in Australia before you go outside for it? Yes. I believe if they make as great an endeavour to secure white labour as they did to secure black labour they will get it, and I believe with less money involved.

12095. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you considered the matter of trying to induce the white labourers to stay in the sugar districts when they do come here, in the way of settling on small workers' homesteads? Yes, I believe it would be a good idea; but so far as I know, they have made no endeavour at all to keep people in this district.

12096. But I am speaking of the idea of settling men on these small homesteads? I believe it would be a good idea. There is one other matter I would like to refer to. I do not think there should be any extension of time given for the employment of islanders, or that the time should be extended for deporting them, because it will only give the employers an opportunity to give lower wages.

12097. *By the Chairman*: How would you propose to deal with the "boys," supposing you had a lot of them collected at the various ports? Well, there are 600 in this district, and you might get them away in one ship.

12098. But in the districts where there are 1,200, what would you do with the 600 who were left? Leave them on the farms where they are at present. They should be allowed a ration allowance, but the farmers should not be allowed to employ them, as that would lead to lower wages being paid to the white man.

12099. Would you suggest any way of dealing with the "boys" who have spent all their money, and have nothing to take home with them—Would you be in favour of allowing "boys" like that to earn a little money to enable them to buy a box to take home? No; I would not be in favour of any extension of time at all.

12100. Do you not think they would be very unwelcome at their islands without any boxes at all? That is their own fault, and I would not allow the legislation to interfere with them.

WILLIAM HARVEY, Contractor, examined:

W. Harvey. 12101. *By the Chairman*: On what subject do you want to give evidence? As regards the employment of white labour.

19 May, 1906. 12102. What is the class of labour you employ at the present time? White labour.

12103. At what occupation? Cutting firewood.

12104. What wages do you pay? I pay the woodcutters 5s. per cord, and the draymen 7s. and 8s. per day.

12105. Do you know what sort of wages a man can make at 5s. per cord? If they are any sort of men at all they can make 7s. 6d. a day.

12106. *By Mr. Paget*: Do the men keep themselves at those wages? Yes.

12107. *By the Chairman*: Have you any difficulty in getting sufficient men at 5s. per cord? It is very hard to get competent men. I have always had a difficulty.

12108. Can you get men to stick at the work at 5s. a cord? Some of them.

12109. And you can get sufficient drivers and draymen at the wages you offer? No. Some of them work for a few days and then they find that the work is too hard and they leave it.

12110. Do you think there is a scarcity of that class of labour here? Yes; there is a scarcity of good men. There are any amount of men knocking about, but they will not work. Ten men are sufficient for my work, but I had thirty-six pass through my hands altogether, and eventually two men carried it out.

12111. *By Mr. Paget*: What quantity of wood did you cut? 1,000 cords.

12112. You do not employ any coloured labour? No.

12113. This is the first year that the Colonial Sugar Refining Company have had all their wood cut by white labour? Exactly.

12114. It is an attempt to keep the white labour in the district? There should be plenty of men in Ingham, but they will not work. I have had to get eleven men from Townsville to finish my work, and I doubt very much now whether I shall finish it in time.

12115. *By the Chairman*: Can you suggest any remedy for that difficulty? No.

12116. Do you house your men? They house themselves.

12117. Do they have tents? Yes. I have a grass humpy, and about nine or ten men camp there. Some have tents, and some have not, and those who have not got tents stop in the humpy.

12118. Do they cook their own food? Yes.

12119. *By Mr. Paget*: Do they provide a cook for themselves? No; each man cooks for himself.

12120. *By the Chairman:* When a man works all day, and has to cook for himself when he gets home at night, is it not very attractive work? I have done it for twenty-six years. W. Harvey.
12121. Yes, other men have done it too; but they are getting more particular nowadays? I admit it is 19 May, 1906. W. Harvey.
12122. Can you suggest any remedy for the difficulty caused by the shortage in the number of men? I consider that, so far as canegrowing is concerned, unless the kanakas are retained, we shall not have sufficient white labour to cultivate and cut the cane, and I am afraid that one-half of it will be left in the ground. We certainly have not got the white men who will stick to it at the present time.
12123. *By Mr. Nielson:* You mean at Ingham? No; in the Herbert River district.
12124. Do you not think that is rather too much to expect? I know one farmer who has offered 5s. per ton for cutting and loading cane and laying the lines, for a 25 to 30 ton crop.
12125. How many hundred men do you think ought to be applying for that job? I consider there ought to be a good many, but there are none.
12126. Your idea is that 100 men should apply for every job? Not at all; but I consider that is a very fair price to offer. I know I could make good money at that.
12127. How many acres? There are three farms, and the crops are estimated at 4,000 tons.
12128. What endeavour has your friend made to get labour to cut it? When I was making arrangements with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, he wished to get it cut by day labour. If he does not get white labour he will have to get coloured labour to do it, as there are plenty of Chinamen and other coloured labourers here.
12129. That would probably suit him better? I do not know.
12130. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you think 5s. a ton for cutting such a crop is a price at which you can make fair wages? I do.
12131. What wages could they make? I have men working for me who average 3 tons a day. The Italians at Macknade will average 3 tons a day, and any contractor who can make 9s. or 10s. a day does very well, as that is a fair wage. I consider when a man takes a contract he is entitled to have that wage, as he works hard and he works long hours.
12132. *By Mr. Nielson:* I suppose this particular case you refer to is pretty well an index to the conditions existing right throughout Queensland? There are other farmers who give a similar price.
12133. Can you mention anyone who is able to get any labour? I only know one farmer and I am informed that he got his cane cut for 4s. per ton untrashed, for cutting and loading and putting on the truck, and the farmer lent his horse.
12134. *By the Chairman:* Is all the firewood cut by white labour? This year it is, but it is the first year that it has been so.
12135. Assuming that the intention is to let them do the work in future, do you not think it will have the effect of bringing good axemen here when they know there is a certainty of getting that class of work? I got some good axemen and they refused to go into the cane gangs.
12136. I was referring to axemen to supply your wants and not the cane gangs? Yes; you will get some good axemen to come here.

FRANK FRASER, Cane Farmer and Contractor, examined:

12137. *By the Chairman:* What are you? I am a cane farmer and other things. F. Fraser.
12138. How many acres have you got under cane just now? About 130 acres. 19 May, 1906.
12139. Is it registered? Yes.
12140. Was it registered recently? I have three small farms, one of which has been registered ever since the Act was passed.
12141. Have you had any difficulty in getting the white labour you required? One year I had some difficulty.
12142. Last year, for instance? No. It is a small farm very near to Ingham, and I have had no difficulty; but I am in a better position than most of the farmers, because I have men employed at other work, and very often I put them on.
12143. Is there sufficient labour in the district for the present year? There should be a sufficiency of men, but, unfortunately, a lot of them have not been accustomed to the work. When they start they want an extraordinary price, and the work is new to them, with the consequence that the employer expects more out of the men than they are able to do.
12144. But will there be enough men, such as they are, for this year's requirements? I do not think so.
12145. You expect that the difficulty will be increased in the future when the kanakas are gone? I do not see what is to prevent a deficiency unless we have immigration. Of course, eventually the men who are here will become more accustomed to the work.
12146. *By Mr. Paget:* And others will be attracted from elsewhere? Yes.
12147. Provided inducements can be given? Yes.
12148. Do you appear to-day as the representative of any association? Yes. I appear as a representative of the Victoria Farmers' Association.
12149. *By the Chairman:* I believe the Colonial Sugar Refining Company are taking steps to get white gangs for this year's cutting? Yes; but a good many of the farmers have already made arrangements for cutting with white labour.
12150. You think this year is fairly safe? It is safe on paper so far.
12151. What is the reason for men being unreliable? Because the work is strange to most of them.
12152. We have been told that men can get into the work in ten days or a fortnight if they want to? It is all unseuse. They can cut cane, but the question is whether they can do it fast enough to satisfy the employer.
12153. *By Mr. Paget:* Or to make it profitable to those who have a contract? There are three classes of men in a gang of fifteen or twenty men—men who are willing and able to cut cane, men who are able but not willing, and men who want to get a few shillings to go to the "pub." The consequence is that the good men are worked to death in order to cut so many tons a day, and they are very often the first to throw up the job in disgust.
12154. *By the Chairman:* The men have it in their own hands by taking only good men into the gangs? That is not so easily done, although it may come about in time.

- F. Fraser. 12155. As the men get to know each other they will form reliable gangs? Yes; they will pick their own mates.
- 19 May, 1906. 12156. Are you getting a better class of men than you got three or four years ago? I think the labourer is about the same. The reason why so many men do not stick to the work is because it is new to them, and it goes hard with them for a time.
12157. *By Mr. Paget*: That difficulty would cure itself if they would only stick to it? But, if a man wants 10s. or 12s. a ton and he is only earning 5s., his employer naturally wants more work than the man is able to do, and he wants to shunt him.
12158. *By the Chairman*: What part of Europe do you think immigrants should be brought from? I should say from Great Britain, if possible; and I consider they should be under agreement before they leave there. One great cause of there being so many unemployed in the Commonwealth is the bad system of immigration—dumping down immigrants in the different centres. They should be engaged in the old country and have a place to go to, the same as a kanaka had when he came to the country, or the same as cattle that may be brought into the country.
12159. Do you think that employers generally would be willing to engage men in England through the Agent-General? I think so.
12160. Without seeing them, just as they had to take their chance with kanakas? Yes; they passed the doctor and got some sort of certificate that they were all right. I would take them, for one.
12161. Immigrants have to pass a doctor before they can leave the old country now? Yes.
12162. Is there anything else you would like to mention? I heard a witness say that 5s. a cord was sufficient pay for woodcutting. I do not think it is sufficient for white men.
12163. Have you done that sort of work? Yes; a lot more than the witness who gave that evidence.
12164. What do you consider a fair wage? I do not think it should be less than 6s.
12165. They pay a better price than that in the southern part of Queensland? They pay a better price anywhere, and it is worth more here.
12166. Is that one reason why they do not get a better class of men at it? Certainly.
12167. *By Mr. Paget*: That is for the class of timber? Yes.
12168. Have you made arrangements for cutting this year's crop? Yes.
12169. You are not depending on the gangs being formed by the company? No; I made all my arrangements some months ago. Suggestions have been made to the Commission at various places with reference to what should be done with the men in the slack season. It has been suggested that they should be given small holdings. I think that is a very good idea, and I do not see anything to prevent it being done. The married men could be picked out and put on holdings, and I consider the Government would be safe enough in finding them sufficient money to make a start.
12170. Under a system somewhat similar to that prevailing under the Special Agricultural Selections Act? Yes. I do not mean that they should be settled in co-operative settlements, but putting families "on their own." The State would be perfectly safe in advancing them rations and implements on loan, with someone to see that they were getting on all right. The money would be returned, the people would become permanent settlers, and everyone who settled would be one more out of the ranks of the unemployed.

LEONARD HARTWELL, Cane Farmer, examined:

- L. Hartwell. 12171. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am a cane farmer—Hartwell and Sons.
12172. How long have you been in this district? About fifteen months.
- 19 May, 1906. 12173. Where did you come from? Townsville.
12174. Were you farming before? Yes, for about thirty-two years in Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland.
12175. Have you any cane growing this year? About 100 acres.
12176. Is it registered for the bonus? Yes.
12177. You have some sons? Yes, five.
12178. Do you have to employ any other labour? Yes.
12179. What is your experience with regard to the quality of that labour? I have had no difficulty, and I have sufficient labour now engaged. I think it will be forthcoming in abundance if we only treat the men in a proper manner.
12180. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you propose to cut your cane with wages men or by contract? By wages men.
12181. *By the Chairman*: What do you mean by treating the men in a proper manner? Sometimes it is hot here. If men get up as soon as they can see and work in the morning and in the evening in order to escape working in the middle of the day, I am satisfied so long as they fill the number of trucks that I want them to fill each day. If they are done by 1 o'clock they can do what they like afterwards. That has been my principle for a good many years. Sometimes in the morning the men cannot eat very much, and they have not always got the choicest things to eat, so, for the last fifteen years, I have given them a bit of lunch and a cup of tea about 10 o'clock. I make it a rule to give four meals a day. I have had no difficulty in the last thirty-three years in finding labour. I think, at the present moment, that we are not in any way slack in labour whatever. I believe, from what I can hear from a friend of mine, that when applications were called for thirty jobs in Brisbane 300 applied for them. Then there is a class of men—they are not worth calling men—who work for a fortnight and, if you give them their money, you will not see them again for ten days. And that is just at the time you want them. We do not require men like that. We require men who, when they sign on for six months, will carry out their contract. I have had a great deal of experience in that matter in connection with sleeper contracts, as we have a sawmill here also. I have been working for fifteen years for the Government. I ought to know a little bit about these things. I have been at work for a month sometimes, and then I pay my men right up, and, out of fifty men, I may get five to turn up to work in the morning.
12182. *By Mr. Paget*: For what reason? Because they like the public-house better than their work.
12183. They are intemperate? Yes. We want a different class of men up here, because if we stop the trucks from running we are responsible. We must keep the trucks running.
12184. If the trucks stop running the mill suffers? Yes. We must have something definite.
12185. You have something definite in your own sons? Yes. We shall never be stuck while we have got five of us ready to work. I can turn out nine men altogether, as the rest are as good as sons. They are not like me.

12186. Are they better? I do not think that you will find another little group like it in Australia.
 12187. It is fortunate that we have one group like it? I do not think you can find an instance where a father sixty years of age has his five sons with him still.

L. Hartwell.

12188. *By the Chairman:* How many do you engage in a year, on an average, of the men who are "wasters," apart from intemperance, as good men are often intemperate? I do not keep those sort of men at all.

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12189. Are there many such men, as people tell us that there are a great many knocking about the country who are "wasters"? It is just like dealing with a flock of sheep. If I were picking a flock of sheep I would put out the black ones and keep only the white ones, and I treat men in the same way. I might say that in picking men I let them work for a fortnight or so, to see what they can do, and if they do not suit me I just say, "You had better go."

12190. Do you find many cases like that? No; because I have had more sense than to engage them.

12191. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you planted an increased area this year? We are plauting 60 acres more this year.

12192. *By the Chairman:* Do you think there is likely to be a shortage of labour in the district after the kanakas go? No.

12193. Where do you think the men will come from? From Sydney and Melbourne.

12194. Do you think they can work here in a climate like this? Most decidedly.

12195. *By Mr. Paget:* Are you here as the representative of any farmers' association? Yes; the Stone River Farmers' Association.

DANIEL PEARSON, Cane Farmer, examined:

12196. *By the Chairman:* What is the area of your farm? I have 250 acres altogether.

D. Pearson.

12197. How much under cane? This year I have about 160 acres.

19 May, 1906.

12198. Is it registered for the bonus? No; only 50 acres.

12199. *By Mr. Paget:* Were those 50 acres registered prior to the current year? About half of it was.

12200. *By the Chairman:* As regards white labour, what has been your fortune in that respect? So far as white labour is concerned, I have not had much experience in using it to cut cane, but I have had first-class ploughmen in my employ for many years.

12201. What about ordinary field work? I think it is possible that white men may be obtained to do it.

12202. Have you been able to get good men? Yes, so far.

12203. You think the character of the work is such that it can be performed by white labour in this climate? Yes; for a certain part of the year, but not for the whole year. I think that towards the end of the season, after the month of October, it is beyond white men's work. I think that very few of them care to stick to it longer than October.

12204. *By Mr. Paget:* From October until when? Till the commencement of May.

12205. You think the work is suitable for white men from May till October? Yes, for harvesting purposes; but the other work can be done by white men all the year round.

12206. *By the Chairman:* Chipping, and that sort of work? Yes, that can be done at any time; but the harvesting of cane is a different matter.

12207. You think there are two or three months in the year when the white men cannot work? It will be discovered so. That is, of course, when the harvesting runs into the end of November or December.

12208. You think there is likely to be a shortage of labour here next year in consequence of the kanakas being removed? I think that next year it will be felt most acutely, but this year, owing to the kanakas being here, it will not be so bad.

12209. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you appear here as the representative of any association? Yes; I am representing the Herbert River Farmers' League.

12210. Your league has not considered the matter of trying to obtain labour from other parts of the State? Not so far.

12211. You made certain representations to the Federal Prime Minister? Yes.

12212. If nothing can be done in the direction you desire, do you not think it desirable for you as a body to try and do something towards supplying yourselves with the extra labour that will be necessary after this year? I think that is the position the league will take up.

12213. You are not going to let things slide? We cannot afford to do it; our all is in it. I have been here for twenty-three years, and have been canegrowing for fourteen years. I have suuk a great deal of money in it, and I hope to see the best labour available. If it is possible to work with white labour, I shall be delighted; but things are being rushed on too quickly. In my opinion, it is absolutely impossible to run it on white labour for the next year or two. It is not only a question of cutting and harvesting the cane, but its proper cultivation is a big consideration. With such poor farming as I have seen in the district lately, they stand no possible hope of getting crops, and it will cost £5 or £6 an acre to keep the land clean. Provided there is sufficient labour to carry out the cane harvesting, where are the crops coming from for next year? There is no labour available for the cultivation of the growing crops.

12214. During the time this crop is being harvested? Yes. Crops are being planted such as I have never seen before in my experience on the Herbert River. Some of the farmers are simply throwing in the plants by white labour.

12215. *By the Chairman:* You cannot expect favourable results from that kind of cultivation? You cannot. It means failure next year. Of course, the man who has not registered entirely with white labour has something to fall back upon this year. He is getting his work done by kanakas; but a great number of those who have registered with white labour are neglecting to cultivate on account of the cost.

12216. *By Mr. Paget:* Cultivation will be neglected to the farmers' loss? Absolutely.

12217. *By the Chairman:* Do you think that if three or four years were allowed in which to get rid of the kanakas the trouble would be got over? Undoubtedly, with the introduction of a class of white men who are capable of doing the work. A great number of the men now offering in the Northern districts are absolutely unreliable. They will not stop more than two or three weeks.

12218. If a start had been made in 1902 to provide against the departure of the kanakas, the difficulty might have been overcome by this time? I think it might have been overcome to a great extent.

12219. *By Mr. Nielson:* And if you get another three or four years, there will be persons in the same position as they are in to-day? I do not think so. Looking at the question from the point of view of the kanakas, to deport those who have been here from twelve to twenty-five years is absolutely condemning them to death.

- D. Pearson. 12220. *By the Chairman*: You think that "boys" who have been here a long time should be allowed to remain? Yes. Those who have been in this country for twelve years and upwards should be allowed to re-engage, and practically do what a white man can do.
- 19 May, 1906. 12221. *By Mr. Nielson*: Give them exemption tickets? Yes. I do not object to sending back those who have been here for less than twelve years, because they would be recognised in their homes.
12222. If a "boy" who had been here twenty years wanted to go home, we should keep him here to save his life? You would be sending him home to his death, because he would not live there three months.
12223. But if he wishes to go? If he wishes to go home, send him by all means. They will tell you very quickly if they wish to go home.
12224. *By the Chairman*: Do you know anything about the islands? No. I have two "boys" here to-day. One has been in the country for upwards of twenty-five years, and the other has been here since 1884.
12225. You think it is quite possible to get white labour if you have time? I threw 100 acres out of cultivation last year. That is my way of looking at it for the next year or two unless there is more white labour of a better class. I am not condemning all of them, but many of the men who are floating around are very little use to anyone. With a better class of farming stock from the old country and Europe, I think it is possible to carry on with white labour.
12226. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you prepared to give the new system a thorough trial, and without bias against white labour? I am. I was the first man in the district to put men under agreement for cutting and harvesting cane. I am finding slides and horses, and paying them 7s. a ton, to ensure getting my crops off. I have 50 acres registered for white labour, and I expect to cut about 1,200 tons.
12227. *By the Chairman*: Is that to put it on the trainway? Yes. That is to trash, strip, cut, and load.
12228. Is it far to the tramway? In no case is it half a mile, and it is done on slides. It is a big price, but it is an experiment. I think I have a fairly good representative gang, and I want to give it a fair trial.
12229. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you think you will be able to carry on at the wages being paid to white men without the continuance of the present banns? No; there will not be any sugar grown in North Queensland without it. Many of the "boys" are very steady and saving. One "boy" in my employment came here in 1898, and he has over £70 to his credit in the Government Savings Bank. That shows what it is possible to do. I have always paid the white men I have employed in the past £60 a year for wet and dry weather, although we sometimes lose nearly three or four months in the wet season.
12230. *By the Chairman*: Do you pay that only to ploughmen? Yes.
12231. *By Mr. Paget*: You try to find them such work as you can in the wet weather? Yes, so long as they can get out; but they do not lose a day.
12232. Are there many islanders settled on land in this district? I think there are very few.
12233. Are there any on the surrounding rivers? I think there are a few on the Tully and the Murray Rivers.
12234. Are they mostly married men? There are very few married men amongst them. There are one or two farming on their own account on Ripple Creek.

RUEBEN NORRIS, Firewood Contractor and Cane Farmer, examined:

- B. Norris. 12235. *By the Chairman*: Have you a firewood contract on just now? Yes, for 2,000 cords.
- 19 May, 1906. 12236. What are you getting? 8s. 6d. per cord.
12237. How are you cutting your firewood? By white men.
12238. What are you paying them? Some by contract at 5s. 3d. per cord and some 25s. a week and found.
12239. Where do you have to deliver? At the main line.
12240. Have you any trouble in getting men to take it at 5s. 3d. per cord? Yes, I have trouble in getting men.
12241. Have you any trouble in getting men at 25s. per week? Yes.
12242. What is the average distance you have to haul from the stump? $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles.
12243. You are growing cane as well? Yes.
12244. What area have you? I have 20 acres under cultivation.
12245. Is it registered? Yes.
12246. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you cut any cane hitherto? Yes, for two seasons.
12247. How did you harvest your cane? With white labour.
12248. Were you registered during the two years? Yes.
12249. By wages or contract? Wages; 30s. a week and found.
12250. How did you manage to get your crop off? On slides.
12251. Did you find the men suitable? We have a couple of men that we have had for the last three or four years.
12252. Are you increasing your area? No; I am not increasing it. I am finishing with it this year.
12253. Why are you finishing? My mate is taking it on himself.
12254. You are selling out? Yes.
12255. What is it you would like to say? There is one thing that I would like to say, and that is that we cannot get reliable labour for harvesting or for woodcutting. We have some good men and some bad.
12256. That is so in every walk in life? Yes.
12257. *By Mr. Nielson*: You even get them amongst the parsons? Yes. We have seen many of them cutting cane and firewood, and they make handy men.
12258. *By Mr. Paget*: You propose to carry on your business of woodcutting? Yes.
12259. How do you propose to do it, as you say there is not sufficient good labour? Either introduce immigrants or pick out the good labour and keep them here until more of their sort are in the district to carry on the labour.
12260. *By the Chairman*: How will you induce them to stop? Find them work to keep them here.
12261. *By Mr. Paget*: But where you have an industry which gives employment to an additional number of men during six months in the year, how are you going to find work for all of them in

- the off season? We would take over work of such a description, such as cutting firewood or grubbing R. Norris.
 or putting more land under cultivation.
 12262. You think more work can be found for them? There is sufficient work to keep men in the 19 May, 1906.
 district.
 12263. Have you been following up contracts for many years? Yes; for four years in this district.
 12264. Do you think it would be to the men's interests if they had homes to go to instead of wandering about the country? Yes. The biggest population of working men at the present time are those walking about the country. They only come to work for two or three days and then off they go.
 12265. Then you would favour a system of small homesteads for men who desire to work in the cane fields when their labour is necessary or called for? Yes.
 12266. By the Chairman: Anything more? I have tried both black and white labour and I find there is trouble on both sides. You get good and bad together. If you are picking a number of white men you might get one out of every twenty that is any good.
 12267. By Mr. Paget: That is a small proportion? You would find it so if you worked with them.
 12268. Perhaps I have had more experience with men than you? That is quite likely.

FREDERICK JOHN HEARD, Cane Farmer, residing at Halifax, examined:

12270. By the Chairman: What is the area of your farm? I have 160 acres of cultivation. F. J. Heard.
 12271. Do you appear as the representative of the Halifax Planters' Club? I do.
 12272. Is your cane registered for the bonus? Half of it is. 19 May, 1906.
 12273. Have you made any arrangement for cutting your cane next season? I have. I propose to get it cut by white men on wages.
 12274. By Mr. Paget: Has your cane been registered for very long? It has been registered since the 1st of January of this year.
 12275. You have not had your cane cut by white labour hitherto? I had 10 acres cut by white labour three years ago.
 12276. By the Chairman: What wages are you going to offer? 30s. a week and 5s. a week bonus. I shall have the cutting and loading done by means of slides and derricks, and loaded on to portable trams.
 12277. Have you got your men engaged? I have.
 12278. Local men? Yes.
 12279. Has your club taken any steps towards the introduction of labour for the future? Not so far, because we have always had the kanaka to fall back on. They have only registered small areas.
 12280. You have done nothing as yet to meet the difficulty that will occur after the 31st of December? Not so far.
 12281. By Mr. Paget: Do you propose to discuss this question and see what can be done? Certainly. We shall have to do that for our own interests. The man I have has three of the picked men of the river, the well-known Hood's gang, and I think it would be hard to find three men to equal them.
 12282. By the Chairman: You have no fear for the immediate future? Not this year.
 12283. Can you suggest any means by which labour can be introduced into this district next year? I think the Immigration Act should be amended to allow suitable agricultural labour to come in.
 12284. By Mr. Nielson: What prevents that now? They have to pay their passage now.
 12285. By the Chairman: You mean free immigration, then? Yes; there should be free immigration. I do not mean to say there is such a shortage at present, because there are good and bad of all classes, both in the whites and the blacks. I have had men, plenty of them, who would work for a week or a fortnight or perhaps a month, and then they would have some little grievance between myself and them. They would then get their cheques and clear out. A kanaka ganger has also pointed out kanakas to me who are "wasters" so that there are good and bad of both sorts. When the kanakas go I think we shall find a big shortage in the labour for the next three or four years. From all accounts white men are prejudiced against coming to the North as it has such a bad name.
 12286. How has it got a bad name? The heat and the climate generally, especially in November, December, and January.
 12287. Do you think that the presence in the North of kanaka labour has had anything to do with debarring men from coming here, as they will not work alongside kanakas? There is something in that.
 12288. And when the kanaka has gone he may view it more favourably? I must admit that the white man has had no inducement to stop here in the slack season. After the harvest is over there is little or no work to do, but the general opinion is that there is a prejudice against coming to the North because of the climate.
 12289. If they get a better idea of the climate, and know what it is, they will not be so averse to coming here? If they come here, and give it a trial, they will be more inclined to stay.
 12290. How many years have you lived here? Eighteen or nineteen years.
 12291. You must know something about the climate by this time? Yes.
 12292. By Mr. Paget: In order to carry on your industry successfully during the hot months, might it not be advisable to alter the hours of working for the white men, if they will agree to it? Yes; if the men will agree to it.
 12293. By the Chairman: That is the difficulty? Yes, that is the difficulty. I think there will be a little difficulty in the next three or four years to get suitable men. If you go up town and pick a man he may stop a week or fortnight, and then he will draw his cheque and off he goes. On the other hand, a man you are at first frightened to employ will turn out the best man you could pick up anywhere.
 12294. There is something of a lottery in it? It is a lottery unless you know your men. I know the men I have got to harvest my cane this season.
 12295. By Mr. Paget: Do you make use of the Government Labour Bureau here? I cannot say I do.
 12296. Do you not think it would be advisable for you to make more use of it? I do not think so.
 12297. They have not used it at all in the past? Yes; from what I have read, the farmers in this district have made use of it.
 12298. If the Government Labour Bureau in centres like this were converted into a live institution, do you think it would be a benefit to both employers and employees? It would certainly benefit them, but it depends on what labour is sent by it.
 12299. By Mr. Nielson: You have to risk the men you get from the islands, too? Yes.

- F. J. Hearst. 12300. *By Mr. Paget*: If the bureau were made full use of, are not the employees likely to avail themselves of its assistance in order to approach the employers? If the kanakas are going to be deported, we shall have to fall back upon it, because we have to supply the mill with a certain number of trucks of cane per day. A mob of kanakas cannot get "on the booze," but white men can do as they please. All you look forward to is whether they will turn up in the morning.
12301. The islanders cannot get "on the booze," because the law prohibits anyone supplying them with liquor? Yes.
12302. They get liquor for all that? But they cannot walk into a hotel and demand drink.

ARCHER WILLIAM CARR, Cane Farmer and Storekeeper, examined:

- A. W. Carr 12303. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer and storekeeper, residing at Oakleigh, 2 miles from Halifax, near Macknade mill.
- 19 May, 1906. 12304. On what subject do you wish to be heard? On the subject of white labour. Although I am not a member of the Sugar Workers' Union, I have been asked by them to give evidence. I have employed white labour since August, 1902, in cultivating and harvesting all the cane that I have grown.
12305. What is the average area of the cane you have grown during those years? About 70 acres.
12306. Have you had any difficulty in getting good men? Sometimes. There are good and bad; but you can easily tell.
12307. What proportion are good, and what proportion are bad? We do not employ the bad. You can easily tell by a man's appearance.
12308. How many men would you have to pick over to get a good man? You might only employ one out of a dozen applicants for work.
12309. You do not mean that the other eleven are no good, but that you take the one who pleased your eye the best? A farmer can generally tell the right sort of man. We do not want firemen from steamers, and so on.
12310. When you say that some are not suitable, you mean that they are not agricultural labourers? The other sort would only stop long enough to get money to have a "booze" and get on one of the boats.
12311. Do you expect any difficulty in getting labour after the kanaka is gone? I have my own family to assist me, and will have no difficulty. Others may have difficulty. As far as this season is concerned, there appears to be no immediate prospect of any serious difficulty in getting the crop off.
12312. *By Mr. Paget*: After this year? We will speak about this year first. After this year no doubt more suitable labour will be necessary to be introduced into this part of Australia.
12313. Where do you think they can be introduced from? For this season's crop the Colonial Sugar Refining Company offer to introduce gangs from the southern rivers for all who have not already provided for harvesting their crop. There is no doubt that a suitable class of labour will gradually drift to the Northern districts when the men know that there is employment for the greater part of the year. They will gradually get a better class of labour here suitable for cultivation and the harvesting of cane, provided they can get employment for the slack season as well as the harvesting season.
12314. Do you think there is sufficient labour in the States to meet the deficiency after the end of this year? It is doubtful whether there is.
12315. The industry must be carried on, so where would you propose to make up that deficiency? When it was found there was a deficiency, by introducing labourers from the agricultural countries in Europe.
12316. *By the Chairman*: Would it not be rather late in the day to begin introducing that labour when the shortage was actually apparent? It was said that the mills would all be closed by this time as there would not be enough white labour to cope with it. That was the song at the time, but it has proved to be quite the contrary. There has been any amount of labour. Where it has come from we do not know, but there are many men here when there is employment. It is ample time enough—and I say this thoughtfully and confidently—to introduce labour from other countries when it has been proved that there is not a sufficient supply of suitable labour in the country to do it.
12317. *By Mr. Paget*: You think, then, that there is no danger of any of the cane crops being left uncut through any shortage of labour this year? I do not exactly say that. I say that this year's harvest is provided for.
12318. And after this year? After this year, if it is found that there is not sufficient labour in the country, it would then be time enough to introduce from other countries what men we were short of in Australia. There is a large advent of men, both of farmers and labourers, from the southern States at the present time. Whether they will be able to cope with next year's crop it is impossible for anyone at present to say.
12319. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you would like to speak about? Yes, the financial aspect, and also the sugar bounty—that is, the cultivation from a financial aspect, comparing black labour with white. I quote my own case—and others who have employed white labour speak in the same way. With the assistance of the bonus the farmers have been able to employ white labour, and grow as much cane, and be as well off at the end of the season as they were with the coloured labour.
12320. *By Mr. Paget*: I presume you are of opinion that in order to allow the farmers to be in the same position the continuance of the bounty is necessary? Yes. That is a detail in connection with the expense of producing the crop.
12321. And a big detail when you are getting 5s. a ton? Yes; I regard the rebate as a big detail. With regard to the trashing, it should rest with the farmers to trash or otherwise. It will not be a compulsory clause in the agreement that the cane must be trashed, otherwise 1s. per ton will be deducted from the farmer's proceeds.
12322. You think that is a clear gain to the farmer? Yes. White men do not like the job of trashing. With regard to the late-cut cane it would be much more profitable to trash it on the knife, and it will smooth away one difficulty in connection with the employment of white labour in harvesting. With reference to the rebate, my opinion is that it is necessary to have a further extension.
12323. *By the Chairman*: There must be a continuance of the bonus? Yes, further than is already provided for.
12324. For all time, you mean? No; for a further period of years, but I do not care to say for how many years.
12325. *By Mr. Paget*: Is there anything else you would like to speak about? Well, the system of small gangs works far better with white labour than large gangs. I had a contract for a large portion of the rebate cane on the south side of the river last year, and my experience was that large gangs are unwieldy.

EDWARD CHARLES BIGGS, Cane Farmer, examined:

12327. *By the Chairman*: You appear as a representative of the Halifax Planters' Club? Yes.

E. C. Biggs.

12328. You are a cane farmer? Yes.

12329. What is the area of your holding? I have two farms. The total area under cultivation is about 19 May, 1906.

350 acres.

12330. Is any of it registered? I registered 150 acres in January last; but I had to send down to get it reduced to 90 acres. I withdrew 100 acres because I could not get the necessary white labour. I do not think it is possible to carry on with the white labour we have floating about at the present time. The only means I can see of getting an adequate supply is by immigration and the introduction of lads in their teens, so that they may get acclimatised to the work.

12331. *By Mr. Paget*: From where would you propose to introduce immigrants? From European countries generally.

12332. What wages should be offered to lads in their teens? It would depend on their age.

12333. Say a lad of sixteen years? For the first year he would perhaps get from 12s. 6d. to 15s. a week and found. That is what I am paying lads on my farms now.

12334. Could any number of lads that age be absorbed here? I think so. I would like to get hold of a dozen myself to teach them the methods of cane culture.

12335. I suppose you would want them under six or twelve months' agreements? Under twelve months' agreements. Their wages could be raised after the first year according to the advance they made.

12336. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would you use them for harvesting? I have never had any harvesting done by white labour.

12337. But would you use these lads for harvesting? Yes; as long as we are using slides. I do not know that they would be strong enough to do the cutting; but they would be very handy at loading the cane on to the slides.

12338. *By the Chairman*: Would the canegrowers be prepared to pay any portion of the expense of bringing lads here? Yes. I sent to the bureau in Townsville, and managed to get three lads, and I paid their expenses up.

12339. How did they turn out? Very well. You can teach them to do one-horse work and a little trashing, and eventually they can take on ploughing and general work. They see the harvesting done the first year, and they know exactly how it is done. The introduction of a lot of such lads from the South would be a very good thing.

12340. *By Mr. Nielson*: You have it in your own hands? One man cannot do it. We want the Government to give us some assistance.

12341. You want the Government to do it for you? No. We can pay our own way.

12342. *By the Chairman*: Do you not think there is enough labour in Queensland without going outside? I do not. In the event of there being enough for next year's harvesting, there will not be anything like sufficient labour to do the cultivation work.

12343. *By Mr. Nielson*: Not in Australia? I think not.

12344. Have you any reason for saying that? If 6,000 kanakas are deported, it will take 6,000 white men to replace them, and they must be acclimatised before they can carry on the work. If there were 4,000 kanakas engaged in the cutting and loading season, we would require at least 3,000 white men working constantly at the harvesting, and we should want about 2,000 to do the cultivation in the field. That is where I see the great difficulty.

12345. Then you think it will take 3,000 white men to replace 4,000 kanakas? Yes. I have been engaged in the industry for twenty-four years, and I have seen white labour tried on three different occasions. Messrs Neume Brothers tried it twenty-four years ago, and they tried it thirteen years ago, and it proved a failure both times.

12346. *By Mr. Paget*: In order to grow cane successfully, you must cultivate the young sprouts during the crushing season? Yes; there is the cleaning of the young plant cane to attend to and the ratooning of the cane you cut.

12347. *By the Chairman*: A young lad of sixteen might work a one-horse scuffer? Yes.

CHRISTIAN ROSENDAHL, Cane Farmer, examined:

12348. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A cane farmer. I appear as a member of the Halifax C. Rosendahl Planters' Club.

19 May, 1906.

12349. How long have you been here? Pretty well all my life.

12350. You heard Mr. Biggs give his evidence? Yes.

12351. Do you agree with or differ from him? He has pretty well given my views on the matter. I have my ideas written out, if they will be of any use to you.

12352. Will you read them to us? The white grower has the advantage during the crushing season as regards the net receipts, but during the off season the black grower has by far the cheapest labour, besides having them secured for next season's operations. A white gang, with portable line, will deliver 2 tons of cane per day per man as an average for the season in a crop ranging from 10 to 40 tons; but under the slide system I expect the output to be increased to between 2 tons and 3 tons per day in the same crop of cane. If we receive a little more for our cane and the bounty, and present conditions continue to exist, with the introduction of the right class of immigrants, I have no fear for the future of the industry. But, on the other hand, if we have to depend on two-thirds of the present class of labour, the continuance of the present drink traffic, and the possibility of strikes, all the protection in the world will not save the industry. Having had three years' experience under white labour conditions, I contemplate trying this season a different system of harvesting than by straightout contract, as I have found a great number of men prefer working for the farmer to entering into a big gang. One reason among many given is that the farmer knows the lay of his farm, and should be in the best position to work everything to the best advantage. A second reason given is that the farmer has had the experience, and many a man in charge knows very little about the work. Invariably this will cause the gang to be a failure. The system is to pay the men 30s. per week and found, with an additional bonus of 1s. per ton on every ton delivered during the season over 2 tons per day, but a reduction on anything under 2 tons per man per day. Everything in connection with the harvesting will be found by me, such as slides,

C. Rosendahl, horses, &c. The men will only receive 22s. 6d. per week if they knock off work otherwise than by sickness or through accident. The men themselves will control their own number in this way: Supposing there is a "duffer" in the gang, it will rest with two-thirds of the men whether they shall dismiss him. If dismissed, he will receive 27s. 6d. or 25s. per week, if the gang has averaged 30s. during the cutting up to the time of the dismissal; and 25s. or 22s. 6d. if the gang has averaged less than the 30s. per week. But in dismissing a man, if another is required, he will have to be replaced by the men under the same conditions as themselves. All accumulated bonuses go to the gang at the end of the season. In my opinion the kanakas should not be forcibly deported, but let them leave when they wish to go and when opportunity arises. The few that will be left shortly will not retard the progress of the "white Australia" movement, but might be acceptable if the movement is not successful.

12353. Do you agree with Mr. Biggs's idea about employing lads of sixteen years of age and upwards? I think it is a very good idea.

12354. Do you think such lads would get employment here? I think so. I would be prepared to employ several.

12355. *By Mr. Nielson*: How long do you think lads of eighteen would stay? That is another thing. I have had street lads from Townsville and they were no use. Boys who have been accustomed to agricultural work are nearly always a success.

12356. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else? The first year I went in for white labour the conditions were got over with a little trouble, but anyhow the cane was cut. The second year we asked through the Press for anyone wishing to contract for cane. One of our own number took a contract and organised a gang which was a total failure through drink and not being used to the work. There were carpenters and all classes of tradesmen in the gang. When the gang broke up and we were done with them we were threatened with fires and all the rest of it because we did not pay 25 per cent. which we had deducted from their wages. We decided to pay the men the 25 per cent. we had kept back, as we thought it would be to our benefit to do so because things might have gone to extremes. There were some really good men in the gang that broke up but they could not see their way to do two or three times more work than the others and draw the same money.

12357. *By Mr. Paget*: It was share-and-share system as regards money, but not as regards work? Yes. Any amount of them told me to take it on myself, and they would be prepared to work for less wages, as they preferred that to the big-gang system.

WILLIAM OOSTOS, Cane Farmer, examined:

W. Ogston. 12358. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your farm? About 135 acres.

12359. All under cane? No; 80 acres under cane.

19 May, 1906. 12360. Is it registered? Yes.

12361. How long has it been registered? Since March, 1905.

12362. Now, what is your experience of white labour? So far as I have had white labour I have had every satisfaction.

12363. *By Mr. Paget*: You harvested with white labour last year? No; I did not.

12364. *By the Chairman*: With regard to the cultivation has it gone on all right? Yes.

12365. Do you have any difficulty in getting what labour you want? None whatever.

12366. Have you made arrangements for cutting? Yes.

12367. What are the arrangements—day labour or contract? Contract.

12368. By the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's gang? No; a private contractor.

12369. What price? 4s. per ton for anything over 15 tons, and 4s. 6d. for crops under 15 tons.

12370. *By Mr. Paget*: And the men find themselves? The men find themselves. I find a horse to pull out. I find them in firewood and water for their camp, and also with cooking utensils.

12371. *By the Chairman*: Have you any apprehension for the future after this year? Yes; I have. That is when the trouble will come.

12372. How do you propose to stop that trouble? Stop selling whisky or start immigration. Either will do.

12373. *By Mr. Paget*: That is the situation in a nutshell? That is the main difficulty.

12374. Do you belong to any association or union? No. I was asked by the Sugar Workers' Union to appear here as their representative.

12375. *By the Chairman*: Do you think there is enough labour in the State if they stop selling whisky? There is enough labour if you can get them to come to the canefields.

12376. Do you think the wages offering now will act as a sufficient inducement to attract them from the southern colonies? I do not think you would get some of them away from the towns if you offered them £5 a week.

12377. *By Mr. Paget*: As you have been requested by the Sugar Workers' Union to appear as a delegate for them to-day, did you discuss with the union any question of settling workers on the land? I have not discussed a system of that sort with anybody, but I think it would be a good thing for married men to have small areas of land of their own, where they could spend their spare time in growing cabbages, or anything else.

12378. Is there any such land in this district? I do not know of any land that is available.

CHARLES LACAZE, Cane Farmer, examined:

C. Lacaze. 12379. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I am a canegrower and chairman of the Macknade Farmers' Association.

19 May, 1906. 12380. *By Mr. Paget*: Upon what subject do you wish to address the Commission? On the labour principally. I have got 220 acres under cultivation.

12381. Is it registered for white labour? Yes; this year.

12382. It was not registered prior to this year? No. Last year I did a good bit of planting with white labour. I really started my experience with white labour last year.

12383. And how did you find it? I found that the work could be done just as well by white labour as with the kanaka, except for the price. It costs twice as much if not three times as much to grow cane with white labour as it does with black; but it can be grown just as well. The white man can do the work all right.

12384. *By the Chairman*: You think the white man can do the work all right? Yes. It is not a matter of nationality or colour. It is a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. I have had a long experience with labour. I gained my experience in Mauritius, where they grow sugar, and employ different nationalities in the field, so I know that the kanaka is not the best labour after all. In Queensland, however, the kanakas are sure. If the industry is highly protected, and a system of white immigration introduced to take the place of the black immigrants, then the sugar industry will go ahead as well as ever. We have a great deal of white labour in Australia; but it is not the proper class of labour. If voluntary immigrants were introduced from Europe it would be better. Say a farmer wanted twenty men, he ought to be able to apply to some Government bureau to get those twenty men for him.

C. Laeaze.
19 May, 1906.

12385. *By Mr. Paget*: At whose expense? All immigration has been done at the expense of the Government.

12386. You want free immigration? Yes. I was told that you could introduce immigrants now at £5 per head.

12387. There is a system of nominated immigrants in existence at present which costs £4 per head to bring men out, but they are supposed to be nominated by their own friends? But under that system it takes such a long time to get men out. If you want to get a man from Europe you have to get his birth certificate out, and send it back again, and before you get the man it means nine or ten months. If you could go to the Government and say you wanted so many men from an agricultural country in Europe it would save a lot of trouble, and it would do what we wanted. The present labour we have got here are not agriculturists; 75 per cent. of the men who come here are not agriculturists. They are only attracted by the big prices and the big bonus.

12388. *By the Chairman*: What wages do you think the industry can pay, or what wages can you offer immigrants when they come here? It is a matter of what we are going to get for our cane. The land at the present time is not giving the wages that we are paying. It is the same thing as the bounties in Europe. That is the system we are working on now.

12389. *By Mr. Paget*: It has been put a stop to in Europe? Yes; and it will have to be put a stop to in Australia. We are supposed to get 7s. 6d. bonus from Australia next year, but it is not coming from the land. It is coming from the pockets of the consumer.

12390. *By the Chairman*: As long as the bonus lasts what wages can you pay for the ordinary labourer for work in the slack season? I reckon £1 a week and found would be a fair wage for ordinary field labourers, and 25s. a week and found for cane-cutters.

12391. Do you want to stop wet days out of that? You must. Our wet season lasts three months, so you can see what it means to keep a man in the house and feed him all the time. Some men would like it to be always wet then as they would be getting fed all the time and would not work at all.

12392. If you have three months' wet season, a man only gets nine months' work in a year? Yes; but there is no agricultural industry in the world that will give men work all through the year.

12393. *By Mr. Paget*: Except milking cows? You have to knock off milking cows when the snow falls.

12394. Not in this country—there is no snow here? A man can get eight months' work in the year here, and it is a good enough inducement for men to get eight months' work in the year.

12395. *By the Chairman*: You think there is not enough floating labour in the southern colonies? There is a lot of labour around the towns, especially Sydney and Melbourne, but those men are not agriculturists, and have never worked any part of their lives in the field. They go in for some trade and are knocked off because they are no good, and they go cutting cane because they cannot get anything else to do. Those men are not much good to us. It is no use saying that the white man cannot do the work, because he can do it better than the black man. White men are more powerful and stronger than black men, who are bred on vegetables and all sorts of fruits; but we have not got the right class of men for the canefields. You cannot get the men here to change their lives at fifty years of age and go from one work to another. Get an agricultural labourer from Europe who has been working in the fields since he was sixteen years old and bring him here, and I will put him against five kanakas. The men we get are carpenters forty or forty-five years of age, men who have lost their jobs at their own trade through drink. The wharf lumps can do a hard day's work on the wharf right enough, but when it comes to working eight months in the canefields they cannot stand it. I will give you my experience. I indentured twenty white men for cane-cutting and divided them into two gangs. I picked out ten men first and asked them to sign the agreement. There is a clause in the agreement that says, "You are allowed to finish the season if you start it. If you do not, I retain the 25 per cent. of the wages." Thirty of them backed out because they would have to work eight months. They wanted to come for a month or six weeks and make a cheque. It was with great difficulty that I could pick out seven men among the lot, although I am giving one of the highest prices paid on the Herbert River—5s. 6d. a ton.

12396. Witnesses have told us that there is an opening for lads of from sixteen to eighteen years of age? Last year I had about fifteen of them, and there is only one left; I got them from Townsville. They were brought up in the streets, and none of them would settle down to work. If you gave them a horse to ride they were all right, but they did not like steady work.

12397. They are so near Townsville that they can easily go home again? They do not care for the work, and it is no use keeping them against their will. If you had lads from Europe, they would be happy—they could save money.

12398. Do you think the canegrowers who want labour from Europe would be willing to pay as much towards the cost of introducing that labour as they would have to pay if they nominated immigrants at £4 a head? We were paying from £5 to £7 a head to get kanakas, and I would be only too glad to pay £5 to get white men. Of course, we would have to get the men to work for us for two or three years.

12399. But even for one year? You would want two years. The first year they would be getting used to the work and the climate, and the second year they would be fit for full employment.

12400. *By Mr. Paget*: You would give them an increase in wages the second year? Yes. Men from Europe would have to arrive by June for the harvesting. To the end of the year would only be seven months, and then we should have the right to their labour for the whole of the next year, otherwise they would be no good to us. We should have two crops from them.

12401. *By the Chairman*: The canegrowers would have to give them the current rate of wages? Certainly. My intention was to do this for next year if I could, but it is a matter of time. I think we

C. Lacaze. have between 500 and 600 kanakas employed in the district. If they are taken away after this year we shall be short next year. White men can do the work. The question is whether we can pay the wages unless sugar is highly protected. Of course, there is always the contingency whether the Colonial Sugar Refining Company will treat the farmers fairly. We have been fairly treated so far, but we do not know what the new agreement is going to be.

19 May, 1906. 12402. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are you aware that you can make agreements with agricultural labourers in Europe at the present time—You have to satisfy the Federal Minister that you cannot obtain the necessary labour, and if you satisfy him as to the wages and terms of agreement, you can get a permit from him? I was not aware of that. I would like to get men from Europe without agreements, because the best agreement you can have is to pay them the wages men are getting here. If we can get labour we can depend upon, it will pay us to give good wages. I have had to pass 100 men through my books to keep thirty for my two farms. Men work for three or four weeks, and then off they go.

12403. *By Mr. Paget*: Is that not because they have been used to roaming about for years? Their ambition does not go any further than the public-house. They get a cheque, and off they go. There are two ploughmen going to leave my place. I pay them 27s. 6d. a week; £5 10s. is coming to one, and £5 to the other; and I am satisfied with them. I am sure that they will be back in a fortnight, but during the time they are away, what am I to do? The work cannot stand still.

WILLIAM GOLLOGLY, Cane Farmer, examined:

W. Gollogly. 12404. *By Mr. Paget*: What are you? A cane farmer.

19 May, 1906. 12405. Are you appearing as the representative of any association? I was appointed by the Sugar Workers' Union.

12406. What is the area of your farm? 70 acres.

12407. Is the whole of it under cane? Part of it is under cane, but I keep it all under cultivation.

12408. How much is under cane? About 40 acres?

12409. Is the whole of your area registered? Yes.

12410. For how long a period has it been registered? For three years.

12411. What has been your experience of white labour during the past three years? I have had no difficulty in harvesting my crop. I let it by contract.

12412. At what price? 5s. and 6s. a ton, according to the weight per acre, and find themselves.

12413. Did that include trashing? Yes.

12414. Did the men work on the co-operative principle? One man took the contract and found the men, and the gang divided the spoil amongst themselves.

12415. Did the men who started the work go right through the season? Most of them did; I think two knocked off.

12416. Were they satisfied with their earnings? Yes. I never heard anybody growl.

12417. How did you manage about labour for your ordinary cultivation? My family and I pretty well did that ourselves.

12418. Do you think there will be sufficient labour this year, in view of the larger area that is now registered? I think there will be sufficient for this season, but I do not know about next year. So many kanakas will be leaving the district that there may not be enough white men.

12419. Do you not think you will get enough men from the South? I think we can get them from there.

12420. You do not think there is sufficient floating labour here to fill the places of the kanakas? I do not think there is.

12421. How can the deficiency be made up? Immigration from Europe would be about the best means.

12422. At whose expense should agricultural immigrants be introduced? At the expense of the Government.

12423. Suppose it was found that there was a sufficiency of labour in this State and the other States, but the men had not the money to come up here, would the employers be in favour of paying the coastal passage money? I should think so.

12424. That is if the men came up under agreement? Yes; if they came up under a twelve months' or two years' agreement.

12425. Do you not think it would assist the canegrowers generally if they offered to pay part of the passages from Europe? Yes.

12426. Some question has arisen respecting the pay for wet time during the cultivation? I do not employ any white men except in the crushing season.

TELLY VELLY MI, a Native of Malayta, examined:

Telly Velly MI. 12427. *By Mr. Paget*: How much you stop 'longa here? Five years.

12428. What name you want to talk? Me want to go home, but I got no money.

12429. Why you no got money? Money finished 'longa tucker.

19 May, 1906. 12430. You got little money in the bank? No.

12431. How long you been walking about? Me walk about five months now.

12432. How much wages you get when your agreement finished? 13s.

12433. How much money you catch 'em altogether? Me catch 'em £16 altogether.

12434. You want to go home? No.

12435. Did you tell "Government" you wanted to go home? No. Me have no money for boxes, and don't want to go home with nothing. Suppose you buy box for me, I go.

12436. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many Malayta "boys" stop here? Plenty stop here.

12437. You altogether got no money? No got 'em money.

12438. You savee ship been here two or three weeks ago? Oh, yes!

12439. You no want to go then? It cost £2 10s. to go that time, and me got no money.

12440. How many "boys" stop longa Queensland who come from same "passage" as you? Plenty fellow come from my passage.

12441. Suppose all you Malayta "boys" go home, plenty ki-kiyour country? Yes; plenty tucker longa my country.

12442. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you buy tucker in your country? Yes; plenty tucker in my country.

SUONALEA, a Native of Malayta Island, examined:

12443. *By Mr. Paget*: How long have you been here? Thirteen years.
 12444. What name you want to talk? I want to know when we can go home.
 12445. If you want to go home you can go home—Did you tell Mr. Troy you wanted to go home? No.
 12446. One fellow schooner stopped here two or three weeks ago, why you not go then? I did not have any money.
 12447. For what? To buy 'em passage and take something home.
 12448. You no got work? No. You stop me from getting work.
 12449. *By Mr. Nielson*: What name "passage"? Qui.
 12450. Plenty "boy" stop longa Qui? Plenty.
 12451. Suppose all "boys" longa Qui go home one fellow ship, you think plenty "ki-ki" there? Any amount.
 12452. Plenty garden stop longa Qui? Plenty.
 12453. *By Mr. Paget*: You man longa saltwater, or man longa bush? Man longa saltwater.
 12454. *By Mr. Nielson*: Plenty man bush stop longa Qui too? Too many.
 12455. Plenty "ki-ki" stop longa bush too? Plenty.
 12456. Suppose you go home Qui, you get plenty "ki-ki"? Suppose I go home, I get sort tucker I like.
 12457. Suppose ship come here, plenty "boy" go home? Plenty "boy" go home.
 12458. How long you been walk about? About six months.
 12459. How much money you get when agreement finish? £14.
 12460. You been spend him altogether longa tucker? Yes.
 12461. Money finished now? Yes.
 12462. Do you know Fiu? Yes.
 12463. You been there? Yes.
 12464. What sort of ground at Fiu? Sandy ground.
 12465. Good ground longa garden? Good ground.
 12466. Plenty swamp? Plenty.
 12467. You know swamp? Not much.
 12468. Plenty water longa Fiu? Big river.
 12469. Plenty fever longa Fiu? Little bit.
 12470. You savee missionary stop Fiu now? Yes.
 12471. You know Mr. Caulfeild? Yes, Maru.
 12472. You missionary "boy"? Yes.
 12473. *By the Chairman*: You belong Miss Young's mission? Yes.
 12474. What for you no go home? I got no money for passage.
 12475. *By Mr. Nielson*: What for you no go home when you got £14? I want to stop little bit.
 12476. Suppose Malayta "boy" go home, he get plenty "ki-ki"? Oh, plenty! No trouble about tucker—any amount tucker.
 12477. Suppose ship go to Lucinda, you think plenty "boy" want to go home? Plenty "boy" got work.
 12478. Walk-about "boy" go home? He got no money now. Suppose season finish, he want go home.
 12479. Suppose you get passage, you go? Yes.
 12480. No box, you never mind? No.

Suonalea.

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FRANCIS ALEXANDER RANKIN, Cane Farmer, examined:

12481. *By Mr. Paget*: What is the area of your holding? 385 acres.
 12482. How much have you under cultivation? 120 acres.
 12483. Are you registered for white labour? No; not an acre.
 12484. Then you cannot give us any information on the matter of growing cane with white labour? No; not by figures.
 12485. Can you inform the Commission whether there is any land available in this district which would be suitable for cutting up into small blocks and settling working men on them? There are some blocks of land. Do you want a description of them?
 12486. Is it land that is within a reasonable distance of the mills? I do not think so; not that I know of.
 12487. Well, you have evidently some other lands in your mind? There are 1,000 acres on Elma Grove, the freehold property of Mr. J. T. Abbott. In that 1,000 acres there are not 5 acres that are not fit for sugar-growing. It is rich soil.
 12488. Is Mr. Abbott prepared to cut it up into small blocks? Yes; if he thinks he can get delivery of the cane.
 12489. At a reasonable price? Yes; if the grower can get the cane to the mill.
 12490. The idea is to settle men on small areas so that they can settle down and make homes for themselves, and that their labour may be available during the crushing season, and they can work on their farms in the off season? On the other side of the Stone River, 7 miles from here, there is a large block of country, which has been under offer to the Government, I believe, for 10s. an acre.
 12491. There is land offering in the district at a reasonable price? Yes; there is plenty. If the Government want land to settle men on in small blocks, there is plenty of it here.
 12492. One of the objects of the Commission is to try to ascertain whether suitable labour can be obtained to take the place of the kanakas who are supposed to be removed from the industry at the end of this year—Have you any knowledge of the labour in this colony? I have a good deal of knowledge about the labour conditions. When I heard that the kanakas had to go, I thought it was a shame we should be disturbed after we had taken up land and made homes for our wives and families, and before they gave us a guarantee that they would provide us with reliable labour. The kanaka is reliable enough, and if he were allowed to stop there would be none of this trouble. So far as the question of reliable labour is concerned, I think every man should speak the truth straight out in a case like this. If a man is addicted to drink or he likes to have a drink, he should say so. I know myself I often leave home and say I will not take a drink, and I come back—well, not exactly tight, but I have broken my word.

F. A. Rankin.

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F. A. Rankin. 12493. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak? Every man should tell the truth, and if he takes a drink he should say so.

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12494. Have you given the question of the deportation of the kanaka any consideration, as you know the Federal legislation says the islanders may not work any longer in the sugar industry after this year, and may be deported? I have not engaged any labour lately; but I have spoken to the "boys," and they say, "Ma no want to go home."

12495. You have not given much consideration to it? I would sooner have white people myself. In the last two years we have had a lot of trouble with the kanakas, and I shall be glad when they are gone. I do not want to keep them, and I do not know anybody who does, although, if we did not stick up for our rights now and then, we should all be bankrupt now. We are nearly that now. I have got great faith in the future if we are allowed to get labour.

12496. You mean suitable agricultural labour? Yes. We find there are a lot of men going out of the industry, and we want to be in a position to know where to go to fill the places of those men. I do not think there would be any anxiety on the part of any of the farmers if we could do that. That is all we want.

12497. Probably co-operation will help you in that respect? I hope so.

EDWARD WALLER, Cane Farmer, examined:

E. Waller. 12498. *By Mr. Paget*: What is the area of your farm? I have two farms. One is 108 acres, and the other 160 acres.

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12499. What is the area under cultivation? About 70 or 80 acres of cane under cultivation.

12500. Is any of it registered for white labour? Part of it. I may say I have had thirty-five years' experience up here.

12501. Have you any experience of cutting cane with white labour? I registered for white labour in 1903 and 1904, and I must say I was very unlucky with white labour. It turned out to be bad.

12502. Would you kindly tell us the reason for that? They were addicted to drink.

12503. Were you unable to get your cane harvested owing to that reason? That was the reason.

12504. And you had to resort to coloured labour? No; not altogether. I engaged a gang of men but they broke their agreement by getting drunk and becoming disorganised. That was in 1903. It ended in their giving up the work entirely. I was then thrown on my beam ends and did not know what to do. This was in November. I heard of a gang of men who had just finished at Halifax and I succeeded in getting them to cut my cane.

12505. How did you get on in 1904? I did worse. I engaged a gang of men who did the same thing again. They were all drunken men or men addicted to drink. They broke their agreement entirely, and I had to make up another gang. They did part of it, but I lost considerably by them.

12506. But you managed to scramble through? Yes; at a loss.

12507. What arrangements have you made for taking off your crop during the current year? I have registered the same farm again, and I have engaged a gang to harvest the cane at a very high price—7s. 1½d. per ton to trash, cut, load, and draw out, and I find the horses.

12508. You hope that the work will be more satisfactorily carried out this year? Yes.

12509. What about the outlook after this year? We are at a loss to know how we shall get on in regard to labour if the kanakas are deported.

12510. Are you a member of any farmers' association? Yes; of the Macknade Farmers' Association, and of the Herbert River Farmers' League.

12511. Do you represent either of those associations to-day? I am here as a representative of the Herbert River Farmers' League. The kanaka has been our mainstay ever since I have been on the river—and I am one of the oldest sugar-planters here.

12512. Has your league taken any steps to try and secure labour for the future? Yes; we have sent a petition down to the Federal Prime Minister.

12513. *By Mr. Nielson*: You have asked somebody else to do it for you—Have you taken any steps to secure labour yourselves? Yes; by writing down to the Prime Minister.

12514. But do you not know the difference between asking another man to do a thing for you and trying to do it yourself—Has your league made any endeavour to procure labour besides asking the Government to get it for you? Not directly.

12515. *By the Chairman*: Perhaps you have depended on the Colonial Sugar Refining Company to provide labour for you? The Colonial Sugar Refining Company have undertaken to engage gangs.

12516. *By Mr. Nielson*: Why have you had to make a contract at 7s. 1½d. a ton when we have evidence that other people are getting it done as low as 4s.? Last year the cane was not cut. It is stand-over cane and is very dirty, and it is more expensive to cut on that account.

12517. *By the Chairman*: Is there any other subject on which you would like to speak? The labour question is the principal thing. We are very desirous that the Government should assist us with immigration.

12518. Do you not think there is sufficient labour in the State? Up to last year we could not depend on it.

12519. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are you of opinion that in the whole of Australia there are no reliable men to be got? I do not say anything of the sort. I only say that, so far as our experience goes, we have not got reliable labour.

12520. You have farmers' associations throughout the district, with a central league—Would it cost you very much if you all combined to find out what labour is obtainable in Australia? We have found out that labour is available, but we do not know that it will suit us. The labour down South may suit the South, but it may not suit the tropical North.

12521. Do you think that the men the Colonial Sugar Refining Company are bringing from the South will be of any use to you? I think so, because they are likely to be accustomed to the work.

12522. Could not the farmers' associations combine to bring more men from the South? It is very doubtful.

12523. You have made no attempt to find out? Yes; we have. We got men up last year and the year before. I have telegraphed to the South for men.

12524. With what result? With no result at all. When I wanted a dozen, I got one man.

12525. Did you notice in the papers that the Mosmann mill sent a man South to engage labour, and that he managed to engage 150? I saw a statement to that effect. E. Waller.
 12526. What particular service do the farmers' associations render to the farmers if they merely instruct their secretaries to write a letter to the Federal Prime Minister, asking him to do the active part of the work? They do a lot of work in connection with sugar agriculture. 19 May, 1906.
 12527. If you are really of opinion that you have not got sufficient labour, do you not think the main service your associations could render would be to organise the labour for you? It might be some help to us.

JOHN WILLIAM WALKER, Manager of Ripple Creek Plantation, examined:

12528. *By the Chairman:* You are manager of Ripple Creek Plantation? Yes. J. W. Walker.
 12529. You have had some years' experience here? I have been here for some years. 19 May 1906.
 12530. Up to the present time you have worked with coloured labour? Mainly. I have had a little experience of white labour, but very little.
 12531. What have you to say about the class of white labour that you have employed? It has been most unreliable.
 12532. In what direction? Through intemperance.
 12533. If they had only been temperate, would they have answered your purpose? The men can work when they like; they are fair average workers on the whole, but you cannot depend on them.
 12534. *By Mr. Paget:* Do you work Ripple Creek mill with white labour? No; mixed. We have registered a large area for the bonus this year.
 12535. *By the Chairman:* You are using white labour for it? Yes. I have let a contract to trash, strip, and deliver. The cane was grown by coloured labour.
 12536. What are you paying for trashing? 6s. per ton for the cane delivered on the main line. Before I engaged this gang I tried to let contracts for trashing to many of the men who were looking for work. I intended to work it in smaller areas—200 or 300 tons to two or three men—but I could not get them to take it.
 12537. Was that partly because they had not sufficient experience? I think they could not trust one another. One man would be willing to take a small area to do by himself, but you cannot run a place by letting one man take 5 acres. I then got a gang to take the lot. Prior to getting this gang, I wanted twelve men to do a little weeding and trashing. I left word at a hotel in Ingham to send them out, and three men came out.
 12538. *By Mr. Paget:* What wages were you paying them? 20s. a week and found. One man only stopped half an hour. I met him coming back and asked him what was the matter, and he said, "I am not going to do that work for 3s. 4d. a day"—it was weeding. I said, "Is it hard?" He said, "No; there is nothing in it. I am not going to do it, and I won't recommend any other man to do it. It is only a nigger's job." He was quite cheerful over it. He was a young miner from the Towers. The other two went on weeding, and I had them for a month. A day or two afterwards nine more men came from Ingham, and I put them on at chipping. They worked for three days, and during that time I said nothing to them. After the third day, in the morning, at turn out time, two of them came to me and said, "We want to go away, sir." I said, "What for?" They said, "It is too wet." That was from the dew—it was not raining. The cane was rather wet. They said it was too wet. I said, "I was just going to speak to you men about the work you have done. Have you any idea what you have done in three days? You have done 2½ acres. That should have been done by four men, and there are twenty-seven of you here." The ganger then said, "I have done more work than any two d—n kanakas." I said, "You might have worked hard, but the amount of work you have done is too little." Another man said, "If you are not satisfied, give us our money." They threw down their hoes, and off they went. Now, that happened only last month. I have had no more white men since. I asked these men if they would take a contract at weeding, as I did not want to put them on day work. But none of them would take the contract. I said, "You are frightened you will do too much on contract." And they said, "Yes." Now, there is an instance in which twenty-seven men did 2½ acres in three days—what four men ought to have done—and they threw it up because there was too much dew on the cane in the morning. On another occasion, three men came. One worked an hour and left; the other two worked a month, and then went to the hotel and got tight. They then came back, and got what money was due to them, and cleared out without asking to be put on again. Our tenants have also had a lot of trouble with white labour. They broke up one gang, and organised again; and there was no end of trouble, all through drink.
 12539. *By the Chairman:* The men are right enough if they only keep sober? The majority are. It is no use us sending down South for white labour now. If we write down and ask an agent if he can supply us with fifty or 100 men next year, he will say "Yes;" but how do we know that we can get them next year? We have employed coloured labour to carry on so far, and they will be here this year.
 12540. Can you suggest any means by which the men can be induced to keep sober, and therefore be more valuable to themselves? Yes. Let the labour unions preach a little thrift and temperance to the men. But instead of doing that they teach them to drink. There is no such thing as thrift and intemperance, as the two will never go together.
 12541. What do you think about settling men permanently on small holdings? It would be a good idea if you could get them to settle.
 12542. Would there be any difficulty in getting them to settle? Yes. If a man wants to settle on a piece of ground, he is going to find the means of getting there himself.
 12543. *By Mr. Paget:* But suppose these men have no means? The man who wants to settle on the land is thrifty, and always has a little. It is a good thing to settle men on small areas, but who is going to find the money?
 12544. Could they not find it themselves? If they want to go on the land, and they can find the money themselves, they will settle on the land without asking anybody.
 12545. *By the Chairman:* Do you know any land that will be suitable for them to settle on? There is a certain amount of land available in the district if a person wants to buy it. A man can always get land if he wants it.

J. W. Walker. 12546. Would it not be an advantage to offer this land on long terms to encourage men to settle on it? The man who comes up North does not want a small area. He must have a large area. He wants a large area so that he can make money out of it and get

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12546a. What can he grow except cane? There is no other crops he can grow here. You cannot grow maize or potatoes, or anything of that kind here.

12547. But the idea is to allow the man to have a home, and give his labour to the canefields in the harvesting? It is a good idea.

12548. You think it is worth trying? Undoubtedly. But you have to establish a home for him. You cannot get a man to go there in his shirt.

12549. Men returning from a contract would have a bit of a cheque? They might have if they keep away from the "pub," which very few of them do. I think there is good land to be got about the district. Those who have the land will be glad to sell it. But the men who settle must have means. They need to have a house, and they want tools. Those who will settle on the land might have sufficient to keep them going for a season.

12550. By Mr. Paget: Even that would be of great assistance in keeping the industry alive? It would.

12551. Even if they turned canegrowers themselves? Yes, that would be all right. The thing is to get sufficient men to take the place of the "boys." It is all very well to say you can get them down South now, but wait until we want them.

12552. By the Chairman: The Mossman people got them the other day, and the Mulgrave people also got them? We do not want them now. Wait until we do want them, and, if we cannot get them, then we shall be in a hole. I do not say that the worker down South is a "waster." He is not a "waster" so far as the man is concerned, if he would only leave the drink alone. It does not want much brains to weed and trash cane. The drink is the great curse here.

12553. By Mr. Nielson: Do the mills in this district pay the men by cheque or in cash? Ripple Creek pays by cheque.

12554. Do you not think it would be better, in the interests of temperance, if they were paid by cash? Very likely; but if a man does not like to drink he will not drink.

12555. Has he not to get his cheque changed at the hotel? No; he can get it cashed at the store or at the office.

12556. By the Chairman: Would it be possible for you to pay the men in cash? It would.

12557. It would not be much more trouble to you? If it would make the men temperate we would soon try it.

12558. By Mr. Nielson: There are some, but not all, who are temperate if there is no temptation put in their way, and that might keep them away from the hotel? I quite agree with you. It might be worth trying.

12559. By the Chairman: If on pay-day a man could put his money in the bank, would it help to make him temperate? I doubt it. If he put it away somewhere where he could not get it out it would be all right. It is wonderful the temptation that drink has got for these men. With regard to getting men, this is a small district, and there are no casual men to call up just when you want them. If you want twenty men in a hurry, and you cannot get them, it may make all the difference to your crop. Your land may be all nice and clean to-day, but rain may come, and in a few weeks' time it is covered with grass.

12560. Is it our idea to settle men here? Who is going to settle them?

12561. Induce them to settle themselves? If a man wants to settle on the land, he will do it without anyone asking him.

12562. By Mr. Paget: It is a matter that requires great consideration? There are plenty of men who will only be too glad to settle on the land if you will find them the means to settle there, as they have nothing themselves.

12563. At the present moment the Government are settling men on the land? Yes. Mr. Boyd tried to get the Government to settle them in the North. There is a lot of land up here—thousands of acres—which they could get cheap.

ROBERT MITCHELL BOYD, Part Owner of Ripple Creek Plantation, examined:

R. M. Boyd. 12564. By the Chairman: What is it you wish to speak about? I saw in the paper that the Hon. D. F. Denham had a scheme for settling men on the land on small blocks. A gentleman named Mr. Newport said there was no Government land available in the North on which to make these settlements. I went and saw Mr. Denham, and told him that there was a block of land here, which was selected in 1872, with 2½ miles of river frontage, and it was now in the market for sale. The price the owner asked was less than the Government received for it, with 4 per cent. added. There is an adjoining block of land containing 700 odd acres, for which he paid £2 per acre, and on which he spent £3,000 in improvements. I put the whole lot under offer to Mr. Denham for £1,200. The other block of 1,040 acres, with 2½ miles of frontage to the Herbert River, is right in the settled district. I just borrowed this map from the department to show you where these blocks are. [Shows map to Commissioners.] That land was offered to Mr. Denham for less than 30s. an acre. I also saw the Chief Secretary about it, but he said he would have nothing to do with it.

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12565. By Mr. Paget: Was that lately? Last month. They cannot say that there is no land available up here.

12566. By the Chairman: Do you consider it would be to the interests of the large growers to have labourers permanently settled in the district? Certainly.

12567. Would it not answer the purpose if the large growers offered facilities themselves to men to get land on extended terms? I quite agree with you.

12568. Why is it not done? There is one drawback to that. After Mr. Denham refused to purchase the property I spoke of, I bought it myself. I am cutting up the land now in 60-acre blocks, and am prepared to sell it. The pick of the land, with a river frontage, I am cutting up into areas ranging from 14 to 47 acres.

12569. Your object is to get people to grow cane for your mill? Yes; and get people to come and work in the mill for us.

12570. But men with such areas would just be cane-growers, and would have no time to give to you? R. M. Boyd. They can have smaller areas. The difficulty is that if men buy land from the Government, they can obtain advances from the Agricultural Bank, but, if they buy from me, they cannot borrow one penny. 19 May, 1906.

12571. If you let a man have the land on easy terms, extending over a long period, surely his own wages would enable him to settle down upon it? But am I to build his house, fence the land, find him rations for twelve months, and a horse and team?

12572. I am not talking of the small farmers, but of the agricultural labourer with a little garden plot? I am talking of the labourer too. If you cut the land up into 5 acre blocks—that is a smaller area than Mr. Denham suggested—he suggested blocks of from 20 to 40 acres—

12573. Of course a man will not live there for ever—He can get a start there, and in three or four years he can sell out and take a larger area—People who are interested in getting labourers should assist such a scheme? I quite agree with you, but where is the tenant? If you want land for settlement, the whole of Ripple Creek is available. The department can get “whips” of land for settlement in areas either large or small.

ROGER MICHAEL TROY, Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders, examined:

12574. *By the Chairman:* You are Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders? Yes.

R. M. Troy.

12575. What is the general feeling among the islanders about returning home? There are not many who wish to go home. We have had two boats leaving Lucinda within the last month, and none but those who went wished to go. 19 May, 1906.

12576. This morning Mr. Crow referred to an incident which happened on 13th February last—He said that about sixty New Hebrides “boys” came to Halifax and asked if there was a boat; he wired to Mr. Brennan, who referred him to you, and the “boys” came to you about a boat, but got no satisfaction—Do you remember the incident? No.

12577. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you remember any “boys” coming to you for information about a ship leaving and you were not in a position to give information? Very often “boys” come to ask for information. Some have come in to-day and I cannot tell them anything, because all three boats are away, and I do not know when they will be back.

12578. *By the Chairman:* Do they not acquaint you with the dates when the boats are leaving? Not always.

12579. *By Mr. Paget:* Not if the shipowner expects to fill his boat at Maryborough or Bundaberg? I presume that is so.

12580. *By the Chairman:* If you do get information, it is only at the last moment, when they want a few to fill up the boat, and then it is too late to get the “boys” together? Yes. I am perfectly certain there were never as many as sixty “boys” came to ask about a boat. There may have been five or six, or up to ten.

12581. Can you throw any light at all on Mr. Crow’s story? No. The “Sydney Belle” has just gone out to the two groups, and we have not heard about any “boys” being stranded in Maryborough.

12582. Do you think it would be better if an occasional boat came to load in the North first, and went down South from here? They would get more “boys” from the North. Very often, when we tell “boys” that a boat is going from Maryborough, they do not seem to care whether they go or not, but if they see a boat at Lucinda they are very anxious to go. The sight of the boat seems to make them keen on going home. I think it is a mistake always to commence loading up in the South. Of course, two out of the last three boats that went out loaded at Lucinda.

12583. They only come to Lucinda when they know beforehand that they can get a full shipload from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company’s plantation? Not always, but when they have a good idea that they will get a full shipload they come North. They do not like leaving from the North. The captains tell me that the winds do not suit them so well as when they leave Bundaberg or Maryborough. I think that the boats should be more under the control of the department, and should be made to go anywhere the department wish. At present they go just wherever it pleases their owners to send them.

12584. You think that once they accept a charter they should be under the direction of the department? Yes.

12585. Can you make any other suggestions with regard to the deportation of the islanders? So far as getting them away is concerned, the only thing is to put on boats that can carry more.

12586. Do you think it advisable to land large numbers of them on the islands in a short space of time? I do not know anything about the islands; but, so far as getting them away is concerned, the only solution is to put on more schooners or steamers to carry more islanders.

(Ayr.)

TUESDAY, 22 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) |

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

MICHAEL KELLY, Storekeeper and Labourer, examined:

12587. *By the Chairman:* Do you appear in any representative capacity? No.

M. Kelly.

12588. How long have you resided here? About one year and ten months.

12589. On what subject do you wish to be heard? With regard to white labour.

22 May, 1906.

12590. Can you tell us if there are any unemployed here now? Yes; I saw a few men lately looking for employment, but they were not successful in getting it.

- M. Kelly. 12591. The word "few" is rather vague—can you give us the approximate number? I think I could count up ten at the present time.
- 22 May, 1906. 12592. Do you know what is the rate of wages ruling for farm work? £1 and 2s. 6d. a week and found. On the plantations they get 30s. and 32s. 6d. a week and find themselves, but the wages are generally 30s.
12593. *By Mr. Paget*: You are not appearing here on behalf of the Sugar Workers' Union? No.
12594. Do you think there will be a sufficient supply of white labour during the next season to do the necessary work on the registered areas? I think there will be no difficulty whatever in supplying the men wanted.
12595. Why do you think so, if there are only ten men unemployed at the present time? I am informed that there are 150 men at Charters Towers awaiting engagement for the cane crushing season here.
12596. They are hanging on, waiting for the crushing to start? Yes. If they are offered a suitable wage they will come.
12597. What do you think will be a suitable wage? 30s. to 35s. a week and found.
12598. For harvesting? Yes.
12599. Do you think those 150 men will be sufficient to supply the wants of what are termed the white cane-growers? I believe there is surplus labour in the different districts. From what I read in the papers, the farmers at the Mossman and Mulgrave have sent down South and engaged men at a cheaper rate of wages, and there are good men in the district waiting for employment.
12600. *By the Chairman*: Does it say in the papers that they engaged men at a cheaper rate of wages? Yes.
12601. This is the first time we have heard that? It appeared in print.
12602. *By Mr. Paget*: Are the men who are waiting at Charters Towers for employment miners? Some are miners who are willing to come into the cane districts. It is not a very skilful man who is required to do canecutting. Of course, experienced men will make the most headway, but I knew a whole gang last year and there was only one *bona fide* canecutter in the whole gang, and they made a great success of it.
12603. In this district? Yes; at Mr. M. Noack's, one of the leading farmers in the district.
12604. Are you in the way of knowing a great deal about the labour that comes into the district? I see the men.
12605. Do you come into contact with the men who come into the district? Yes.
12606. They come to you in the way of business? Yes.
12607. Do you think from your observations that there is likely to be sufficient labour at the end of this year to take the place of the 6,000 kaukas who are supposed to be not able to work in the industry? I have every confidence that they can get white labour in sufficient numbers to take the place of coloured labour provided there is more encouragement offered to the men.
12608. In what way? A better wage. The difficulty in the past was that the terms did not suit the men.
12609. *By the Chairman*: Will the terms you state satisfy the men? Yes; 30s. a week and over will satisfy them. They will not take less than 30s. a week for canecutting.
12610. And £1 a week for field labour? I think they are asking 25s. a week for that. I consider that 25s. a week and keep is quite satisfactory for field labour.
12611. Do you know the Mossman and Mulgrave districts? I have been through them.
12612. Are you aware that the men up there are satisfied with £1 a week and found for field work in the slack season? I did not know that.
12613. You say the men here want 25s. a week and found? I know £1 a week and found is the usual thing, because there are plenty of men to do the work, but men are asking 25s. a week and found.
12614. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you any idea as to the sources this extra labour will be drawn from? The men from the mining towns will come in. They come in every year. Last year Mr. Noack's gang consisted of men from the mining camps from Charters Towers and the wolfram camps up North.
12615. The prospecting camps? Yes. Those men would come again. There is no doubt about that.
12616. For the crushing season? Yes.
12617. And they would go back to the mining camps in the off season? Yes.
12618. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many white men were working as canecutters here last year? I could not give you the number.
12619. Roughly, I mean? 150, I suppose.
12620. How many men, as a rule, were in a gang? The average would be about ten men in each gang.
12621. Do the men work on wages as a rule or on contract? In most places they work on contract.
12622. What was the average price paid? Some contracts differed. I think 3s. 6d. per ton for cutting and loading would be the average.
12623. Untrashed cane? Yes, untrashed cane.
12624. What tonnage per acre would that be? 25 or 30 tons to the acre.
12625. In lighter crops do you know how the prices rise? No. I do not know much about the lighter crops.
12626. What were the men getting who were working for wages? 30s. a week and their keep.
12627. Do you know how many hours a week they worked? They worked from 6 to 6, with one and a-half or two hours out of that for meals. The supply of trucks was so arranged that sometimes they knocked off earlier.
12628. The hours were not regular? No.
12629. Last year, while the harvesting was on, were there any men out of work? There seemed to be always men looking around for work.
12630. Were there many of them? Not many.
12631. *By Mr. Paget*: Where you have large numbers of men employed in any district, you will always find a few out of employment? That is true.
12632. *By the Chairman*: How many years' experience have you had in Queensland? I am an Australian native.
12633. You have been here nearly two years? Yes; I have been in the North for about four years.

CHARLES HOWES, Labourer, examined:

C. Howes.

22 May, 1906.

12634. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A labourer.
12635. Are you at present in employment? Yes.
12636. How long have you been in this part of the country? Nearly eleven years on the Burdekin.
12637. During that time have you been engaged chiefly in the canefields? Yes.
12638. At all sorts of work? Yes.
12639. What are the wages paid to white men in the slack season for ordinary cultivation? About £1 a week; odd ones get 25s. a week.
12640. *By Mr. Paget*: Ploughmen the same? Yes.
12641. *By the Chairman*: I suppose it is the ploughmen who get the 25s. a week? Some of them; but there are more working for £1 a week than for 25s.
12642. What do cane-cutters get? Those who are working on wages get about 5s. a day and rations.
12643. Have you any experience of cane-cutting contracts? Yes.
12644. How do prices range for them? I have got 4s. 8d. a ton for the last two seasons, delivering the cane on to the Pioneer mill trucks.
12645. *By Mr. Paget*: Is it untrashed cane? Yes.
12646. *By the Chairman*: For what weight of crop do you get 4s. 8d. a ton? For all weights. Some were over 50 tons to the acre.
12647. What is the lowest? The lowest was 18 tons. The average was between 25 and 30 tons to the acre.
12648. Were you in charge of the gangs? Yes; it was a share-and-share alike gang.
12649. Have you any objection to telling us what you made at those prices? The year before last we made about £10 a month clear of tucker; last year we made about £8 a month. The frost came and it lightened the cane a lot.
12650. What hours did you work? Between eight and nine hours a day. We would go out at 6 o'clock, have half an hour for "smoke ho!" before dinner, and another half hour in the afternoon, with about an hour and a-half for dinner. We used to go home when we had finished—sometimes we would be finished by 5 o'clock.
12651. There was nothing excessive in the hours? No.
12652. Do you intend to take any contracts this year? Yes.
12653. Have you made definite arrangements? It is not quite fixed up yet.
12654. Had you any difficulty in getting men to complete your gangs? Last year I had a little difficulty because we wanted an extra big gang to get the frosted cane off.
12655. What was the strength of your gang as a general rule? We started with eight, but I had as many as thirty to get the frosted cane off.
12656. To keep up the gang, had you any arrangement by which a man stood out of the gang if he did not suit, or did not do a fair day's work? I never had any trouble with the men. Of course, we had an agreement amongst ourselves.
12657. Supposing a man was often drunk? He was fined 10s. for the first offence, and for a second offence he was discharged.
12658. What about his earnings up to the date of his discharge? He was paid whatever he had earned.
12659. Did you have any instances of men who, although sober, did not do a fair thing? No.
12660. You recruited your gang from the men who came looking for work? Yes.
12661. You have had considerable experience, I suppose, of the floating labour in the district? Yes.
12662. What is your opinion of it? There are a lot of men walking about looking for work who are praying that they may not get it. A lot of them want beer instead of work.
12663. That is a condition of things that obtains all over the State, is it not? I think it is; but this is about the worst place I have struck.
12664. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you been contracting in other districts? Yes; I have been on the Herbert and Johnstone Rivers.
12665. *By the Chairman*: Did you not have as much trouble with the men there? I was not contracting there.
12666. Although there are so many unsatisfactory individuals, you can generally get the labour you want? I have had no trouble whatever.
12667. What is the cause of the men being unsatisfactory—Is it that they are physically unfit because of intemperance, or because of idleness? No; it is beer they want and not work.
12668. Then intemperance is the main evil? Yes.
12669. Are there many public-houses in close proximity to the mill? The nearest is at Brandon, and it is 2 miles from the Pioneer mill.
12670. *By Mr. Paget*: And quite a number of miles from Kalamia? Yes.
12671. *By the Chairman*: Then, when you get a man at work on Monday, he is pretty safe for that week? Yes.
12672. The trouble is that they go away to the public-house on the Sunday? Yes.
12673. Are the men generally comfortable and satisfied on the plantations? I have not heard much about that. I do not travel about much. I attend to my own little affairs, and leave other people to do the same.
12674. Is there anything that you can suggest to make the work more attractive to good men from the South? You hear so many different rumours. I was told the other night by a man that they were dissatisfied at Kalamia about their rations.
12675. You have no means of forming an opinion as to whether that statement is of any value? No. I have not been there for years.
12676. *By Mr. Nielson*: Have you done any cane-cutting on the Herbert and Johnstone Rivers? I did not do any on the Johnstone, but I was on the Herbert for wages for a bit.
12677. Do you think there will be sufficient men in the district for this season? Any amount. I could get fifty men from the Tovers next week if I wanted them.
12678. Do you think there will be sufficient white men available after this year to carry on the sugar industry? I think so.

- C. Howes. 12679. *By Mr. Paget*: Men who will stick to their work? Yes; there are men coming to me every day looking for a job.
- 22 May, 1906. 12680. *By the Chairman*: But are they men who impress you favourably? There are some good-looking men among them. Of course, they are perfect strangers to me.
12681. They looked all right? Yes.
12682. So there are plenty of men about now—Have you any experience about the unemployed men from Charters Towers? Yes; I had two or three last year.
12683. Were they good men? Yes.
12684. *By Mr. Paget*: Were they miners? Yes.
12685. Do you think if mining got on a boom during the crushing season that those men would prefer to stop in the canefields or go back to their old occupation of mining? I had one with me last year, and he preferred the canefields to working in the mine.
12686. *By the Chairman*: Was he an underground man—an 8s. a day man? He got 10s. a day.
12687. The hammer and drill men get 10s. a day? Yes; but the truckers only get 8s. a day.
12688. This man said he would rather work here than in the mines for the same money? Yes.
12689. Do you think there will be any difficulty about labour in the future? I do not think so.
12690. Is there anything you can suggest which would tend to make the work more attractive here? No.
12691. *By Mr. Paget*: It has been suggested that a system of references might be a good thing for both employees and employers; what do you think of that? I do not think much of it.
12692. *By the Chairman*: You do not approve of references? No. If a man's appearance will not get him a job, then a reference will not get him one.
12693. *By Mr. Paget*: His appearance will not do it sometimes? Then he should starve. I never had any difficulty in getting a job, and I have travelled about North Queensland for nineteen years.
12694. What do you think of some scheme for settling these men who are walking about on small homesteads of their own? I think it would be a good idea.
12695. The idea is that they could settle on these homesteads, and their labour would be available in the canefields when required? It would be a splendid idea. A scheme like that would be the means of keeping labour in the district.
12696. Do you know of any land in this district that might be made available for such a purpose as workers' homesteads? There is a lot of land about here.
12697. Crown lands? There is a piece on the other side of the river, at the crossing. There are over 100 square miles in it.
12698. Is it fairly good land? Yes.
12699. How far is it away? About 4 miles to the crossing.
12700. Are you settled down yourself? No.
12701. What area would you suggest for men to settle down on? I think if a man had 60 acres of good land he could make a home on it.
12702. You think that a single man under such conditions might marry and settle down? He might.
12703. *By the Chairman*: Some of the estates here are being subdivided of late, and cut up into small farms? Yes; the Pioneer Estate is cutting up land into farms.
12704. Is that land going off? Yes; it is going off pretty rapidly.

GEORGE MACKERSIE, Cane Farmer, examined:

- G. Mackersie. 12705. *By the Chairman*: How long have you been here? I have been a little over twenty-three years in this district.
- 22 May, 1906. 12706. During that time how have you been occupied? At station work, and for the last seven or eight years I have been a cane farmer.
12707. Have you a farm of your own? It is between my father, my brother, and myself.
12708. Do you employ any white men? One only. You know there are three of us who work.
12709. You do not know much about the white labour? I have had a little experience.
12710. Are there many unemployed at the present time? I do not think there are a great many.
12711. Would you not expect to see a few about just before the crushing season? I have been in contact with most of the farmers, and I have not seen many. I am secretary of the Farmers' Association.
12712. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you appear as the representative of the association? No; I am not their representative.
12713. *By the Chairman*: You say you come in contact with the farmers; from what you have heard them say about the floating labour, what opinion do you form on the subject? Some are fairly well satisfied, but others are not so well satisfied.
12714. Did you hear any comments from them as to the probabilities in the future when the kanaka is removed altogether? Some seem to doubt the probability of getting a sufficient supply, but others think there will be plenty of labour available for this season, at all events.
12715. There is no dispute about that? No.
12716. What is your opinion on the matter? I think that, so far as this district is concerned, there will be no trouble whatever about labour, as we are so close to Townsville and Charters Towers.
12717. *By Mr. Paget*: And this district lends itself so easily to cultivation? Yes.
12718. You can use every improved implement on the fields here? Yes. I have had communications from the unemployed in Charters Towers in the last few weeks, and there seems to be a number of men there waiting for the crushing to start.
12719. *By the Chairman*: And they are willing to come over? Yes; if arrangements can be made.
12720. What would those arrangements be? So far as I can understand, they are prepared to take contract work or the current rate of wages.
12721. Has any action been taken by the employers in this locality to sign on men from Charters Towers? I think so. It is only last week that we received this communication.
12722. When do you commence crushing here? Some time from the middle to the end of June.
12723. Do you know anything about the labour at Charters Towers personally? I do not know anything about it personally, but I know the majority of their occupations. In the list of twenty-four cane-cutters there are clerks and all sorts of occupations given.
12724. *By Mr. Paget*: They sent their occupations? Yes.

12725. *By the Chairman*: How many applied? There are somewhere about 200 on the list.
12726. Who is taking it in hand? Mr. Niven
12727. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you aware if they are young fellows growing up? Their ages range from 22 May, 1906. seventeen years to fifty, but a great number of them are young people.
12728. *By the Chairman*: You are perfectly safe for this year? We are safe for this year.
12729. *By Mr. Paget*: What is the area of your farm? I have 60 acres under cultivation.
12730. Are you registered for the bonus? I have been registered right from the first, that is from 1902.
- The business is in my father's name, but we are all interested in it.
12731. The three of you practically do the whole work? Yes; with the exception of a hired man occasionally. We have had one hired man for nine or ten months.
12732. How do you harvest your crops? By contract.
12733. What rates have you paid? Last year and the year before I had a rather light crop, and I paid 4s. a ton for cutting and loading on to drays.
12734. *By Mr. Nielson*: What did the crop go to the acre? Last year it went 12 tons. It was a dry year; the year before the crop was a little better.
12735. *By Mr. Paget*: Did you have any trouble? No. I had a local man always, and he carried out the contract with his own family.
12736. *By the Chairman*: Did he express himself as being satisfied? He was perfectly satisfied. I am sure of that, because he made money out of it.
12737. Off a 12-ton crop? Yes. It was his own family who cut it.
12738. You heard the questions that were put to Mr. Howes regarding the question of small areas for settling men on the land and retaining their labour for the district—What do you think of that? Well, I think it would be a very good thing if the land were available close enough to where the sugar is grown. Mr. Howes says there is a lot of land available at the crossing 4 miles from here. I am intimately acquainted with that country, and you cannot get on to the part that is open for selection in less than 10 miles from here, and you have to cross the Burdekin to do it.
12739. Do you think that 10 miles is too far? Yes.
12740. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you think 10 miles is too far for a man to ride home on Saturday night? Yes.
12741. *By Mr. Nielson*: The men at Charters Towers do not think this is too far to come to work? It is too far to go home. If men made homes here and lived in them it would not be too far away; but it is a bit too far to have to go backwards and forwards 10 miles every week. We have one or two reserves here that might be opened to selection.
12742. *By the Chairman*: Are they not wanted? They are rather large camping reserves. I do not think they will be wanted.
12743. Are not camping reserves always wanted in this part of the country? Not many stock travel here.
12744. *By Mr. Nielson*: The more settlers you get in the district, the more the reserves will be needed? Yes. Those are the only Crown lands anywhere near at hand. Of course I am not alluding to the town reserve at all. These are outside.
12745. *By Mr. Paget*: Have your association discussed the question of the future labour supply? They have not gone into it yet, as they have been fully supplied up to the present; but there is more white labour required this year than previously owing to the increased number of registrations.
12746. After this year more white labour than ever will be required? Yes.
12747. Do you not think it advisable that the association should discuss the question? I think so.
12748. *By the Chairman*: It should not be hard to substitute white labour for the 340 kanakas now employed in the district? No.
12749. *By Mr. Paget*: Is there a large number of Asiatics engaged in the sugar industry here? There are not a great many.

G. Mackersie.

T. Connell.

22 May, 1906.

THOMAS CONNELL, Missionary, Queensland Kanaka Mission, examined:

12750. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A missionary.
12751. How long have you been engaged in the work? I have been three years in the North.
12752. *By Mr. Nielson*: What mission are you connected with? The Queensland Kanaka Mission.
12753. That is Miss Young's mission? Yes.
12754. *By the Chairman*: Do you know all the "boys" in this district? I know most of them.
12755. Do any of them wish to return home if they can get a ship? Not at present. But two months ago, when the "Sydney Belle" and the "Ivanhoe" were at Maryborough, a number of "boys" wanted to go home, and they could not, because the "Ivanhoe" would not come North, and they did not like to expend money in going down the coast. They were waiting for their masters to send them home.
12756. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many wanted to go home at that time? They were mostly newchum "boys," going to Bundaberg. There were only about twelve over-time "boys" going down. I think thirty-eight went by one boat and sixteen by the other.
12757. Then they did go? Yes, they all went.
12758. Were there some who wanted to go who did not get away? None at that time.
12759. *By the Chairman*: I thought you said that they wanted to go, and could not get away? They were waiting for a ship for about two months. They were going backwards and forwards, and when they were in town they had to pay for their meals, and spent a considerable amount of money. I heard one "boy" say that he had spent all his money on food.
12760. *By Mr. Nielson*: Why did they not go back to the plantations they had left to be kept? They complained to me that they did not get sufficient food when they were walking about.
12761. But why did they not go back to the plantations—they were bound to keep them? When a "boy" is coming into town he does not want to go back to the plantation for dinner, so he stops in town at his own expense.
12762. Who paid their passages to Maryborough eventually? The Pioneer Company.
12763. They did not have to pay themselves? No; they were mostly newchum "boys."
12764. Did any "boys" who were not newchums go to Maryborough? No; they went to the Herbert River. They were waiting to go to Bundaberg by the "Sydney Belle." She did not go, so they went to Lucinda Point.

- T. Connell. 12765. Who paid their passages there? I understand the overtime "boys" paid their own passage money.
- 22 May, 1906. 12766. How many? There were eleven or twelve.
12767. The others were all sent down by their former employers? Yes; by the Kalamia Estate.
12768. What group of islands do the majority of the "boys" belong to? The majority of them are Malayta "boys."
12769. Are they all prepared to go home cheerfully at the end of the year? Some of them are not. They want to go at the end of the year. There is one "boy" from Tanna, who is married to a South Sea Island woman from Santo, and they have a family of five. He works on Mr. Campbell's estate, and he told me on Sunday that he did not want to go home.
12770. Do the "boys" who are not married show any disposition to remain in Queensland? No. The Malayta "boys" in particular want to go home if there is a ship ready. I understand that most of the newchum "boys" agreements finish in September and October.
12771. How many would there be of them? A great number. Most of them are on Pioneer and Kalamia plantations. A number of them say they will remain until they must go. We are trying to get them away without any disturbance, as there is talk sometimes of a little bit of disturbance among them.
12772. Do they understand they have to go? They understand that perfectly; but there is a little dissatisfaction among them.
12773. *By the Chairman*: Are there many missionary "boys"? I dare say there are about 230 in the district.
12774. Are there many out of work? I do not think there are more than thirty, counting men and women.
12775. Are any of them destitute? Some of them have no money, but they have the happy knack of living with others.
12776. Their countrymen support them? Yes; but that is not always going to continue. The newchum "boys" only receive £6 per annum, and they will not be able to support the increasing number of "boys" out of work.
12777. Have you heard any "boys" say that they do not want to go home because they have no money for "trade"? That has been the trouble ever since the "boys" started taking home boxes.
12778. *By Mr. Paget*: They have spent their money on other things, and, when their time is up, they have not sufficient money to buy boxes? The money they receive is not enough to pay for the food they get here, let alone to buy boxes.
12779. *By the Chairman*: Do such "boys" go home without boxes? They must, because they have no money. A number of married men who went home last time had no boxes. They intended to buy their boxes in Townsville, but it was a holiday when they got there.
12780. But they had the money? Yes; but they had to buy what they wanted on the ship, which would mean considerably more money.
12781. But are there many "boys" who have no money to buy boxes? It has often happened that a newchum, who is receiving only £6 a year, has not sufficient by the time he pays for his clothes and other things.
12782. *By Mr. Paget*: He is provided with clothes by his employer under his agreement? Yes.
12783. *By the Chairman*: Have you heard Malayta "boys" talking about the chances of their being short of food when they go home? They will be, because they do not cultivate in Malayta to any great extent.
12784. *By Mr. Paget*: They do not care anything about the future? No. Still I believe that now they are going home they are commencing to cultivate in the islands.

ALEXANDER FRASER, Sergeant of Police and Inspector of Pacific Islanders, examined:

- A. Fraser. 12785. *By the Chairman*: You have prepared for us a list of kanakas employed in this district? Yes.
- 22 May, 1906. [Return produced.]
12786. I cannot help complimenting you, sergeant, on the way you have prepared the return, and for having it ready for us on our arrival here, as that has not always been our previous experience? I have given full particulars of their islands and "passages" and present employers.
12787. From your long experience as a police officer, seeing that there will be 340 "boys" out of employment in this district whom it will be unlawful to employ at the end of the year, do you think there is likely to be any trouble with them? If they are allowed to walk about without having any employment, they will get into trouble, as that is the time a "boy" gets into mischief.
12788. Have you given the subject of deportation any consideration at all? There will be no difficulty in this district as 140 of the agreements will expire in September and October—seventy in each month. If there are any vessels available they can be got away home, and there will be hardly any left at the end of the year.
12789. You think if vessels are put on the berth to take them away there will be very few left? Yes.
12790. And those few will be easily handled? The "boys" are under the impression that they have to go, and they do not make any bones about it; and those who are married to aborigines would like to take their wives with them.
12791. They will not be allowed to? I believe not.
12792. The authorities over there will not allow the gins to land? If it is not possible to get all the kanakas out by the end of the year, some arrangements should be made to keep them employed.
12793. You think the surplus kanakas who are left should be employed? Yes.
12794. *By Mr. Paget*: In the event of the law not being altered so as to allow them to be re-employed, would you suggest that they be drafted into a camp and kept there? You would want a large staff of police, or a small regiment of soldiers, to keep them together then.
12795. In a district like this? It depends on the number that is left. It would be difficult to deal with them, as many of the "boys" belong to different islands, and there is a bitter racial feeling between them, especially between the Tanna and Malayta "boys."
12796. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you come into contract with the "boys" personally? Yes.

12797. Do you think you would have any difficulty in persuading the newchum "boys"—there are 200 of them, so far as I can see—to go home? I am quite certain that every one, without exception, will go on board the next day. A. Fraser.
22 May, 1906.
12798. Do you think it would be to the interests of the "boys" if, instead of their going South, a ship called at Townsville? It does not matter to the newchums, as the employer has to pay their full passage.
12800. Would it facilitate their departure if they went straight away from Townsville? It might.
12801. When the "boys" get away from the influence of the person that they look upon as the "Government"—that is, the Polynesian Inspector—there are other influences at work to keep them here so long as their money lasts? It would be much better for the ships to come here in that case.
12802. *By Mr. Paget*: What about the unemployed—Do you see many of them walking about? There are a few. Nearly all the unemployed come to me for rations; but there are less this year than there have been in any year since I have been here.
12803. *By Mr. Nielson*: Less rations applied for? Yes. There are very few applications this year. Last year there were a great number, and the year before there were more still. In the months of April, May, and June last year there were a tremendous lot of applications for rations, but this year there have been very few.
12804. *By Mr. Paget*: How do the class of men coming here now compare with the men who came here years ago—Are they more temperate? A good many of them are not a very desirable class.
12805. I suppose there are some decent men amongst them? Yes.
12806. Do you have much trouble in the crushing season? A good deal of drinking goes on, but we do not have much trouble. These men go in on Saturday night and get drunk. They perhaps take home some bottles of drink on Sunday, and hang about. Then perhaps they will start drinking on Monday, and keep it up for a week or two, until all their money is spent.
12807. *By Mr. Nielson*: Has there been any appreciable increase in the number of convictions for drunkenness? I cannot say that there has been.

GUSTAVE GEORGE KAMM, Saddler, Auctioneer, and Commission Agent, examined:

12808. *By the Chairman*: What are you? A saddler. I am also an auctioneer and commission agent. G. G. Kamm.
22 May, 1906.
12809. *By Mr. Paget*: You appear as a representative of the Farmers' Association? Yes.
12810. *By the Chairman*: What is the view of the farmers with reference to the likelihood of there being plenty of labour for the coming season? They seem to be afraid that there will be very little good labour available.
12811. Do they anticipate a shortage this year? Not here.
12812. Do they anticipate a shortage next year? They do in another year or two when the kanakas are gone.
12813. Do you think it will be difficult to fill the places of the 340 kanakas who are here now? In my opinion, it will not. The white labour has been a great benefit to me. Whether it will continue or not I do not know. The farmers have been fully supplied up to the present.
12814. We hear there are plenty of men available in Charters Towers for this season? That is right.
12815. Probably they will be available next year, too? That is a question.
12816. *By Mr. Nielson*: It was a question last year whether there would be sufficient this season? Yes.
12817. How many years have you been here? Only about twenty-two years.
12818. Are there not more white men coming to the district every year as the years go by? It is only within the last twelve months that the number has been increasing.
12819. Do they come in large numbers? In sufficient numbers to supply the labour required in the district.
12820. Before that there was no opening for white labour? No.
12821. As soon as there was an opening for white labour, men came here in search of it? Yes.
12822. Do you not think that will be the case in the future? I would not like to say.
12823. Is it not reasonable to suppose that, as the opportunity for employment offers, men will come looking for it? Yes.
12824. Do you think the wages and conditions generally are a sufficient inducement to bring white men from other centres? I think so. They all seem fairly well satisfied with the wages up to now. Last year the cane-cutters told me they made from £2 10s. to £3 a week clear of all expenses. That ought to be good enough for anything.
12825. *By Mr. Paget*: For what period does the cane-cutting last? Four or five months.
12826. *By Mr. Nielson*: If the labour requirements of the district are made known in populous centres in the South, is there likely to be any trouble about men coming? The trouble is to get them to leave the cities and to get the proper class of men.
12827. What class do you refer to? A class of men who will work and not loaf about the streets drinking. Employers are afraid that men will come into town and not go back to work on the Monday morning.
12828. *By the Chairman*: Do you not think it would be a good thing if the men were paid only once a month? I think it would be a good thing if they were not paid until the contract was over.
12829. Just the storekeepers? Just pay the storekeepers for the month and keep the rest of their money back until the contract was finished.
12830. You know nothing about the kanakas? No; I do not know much about them, as I never had any dealings with them.

CHARLES GRAY, Cane Farmer, examined:

12831. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your farm? I have 150 acres of cane land. C. Gray.
22 May, 1906.
12832. Are you registered? I had 30 acres registered last year.
12833. Are you employing any kanakas? Yes; five.
12834. Did you cut your cane with black labour last year? I cut it with mixed labour, both black and white.
12835. Have you any fear of a shortage of labour after the kanakas go away from here? For the present year we shall be all right.

- C. Gray. 12336. How about next year, when 340 kanakas go away from here, will that make a material difference?
 I think it will make a slight difference.
 22 May, 1906. 12337. Have you any doubt but that 340 good men will come into the district to replace the men who are going away? I think we shall be able to replace the men who are going away all right.
 12338. What is your experience of white labour; have you employed much white labour since you have been here? In 1903 I registered some cane for white labour, but I did not find it a success.
 12339. How is that? I think the gang of men I had were inexperienced in the first place.
 12340. Were they sober? Yes.
 12341. What did it cost you per acre to cut your cane? It cost 5s. per ton to cut and load it.
 12342. What was the weight of the crop? The crop averaged 25 tons to the acre.
 12343. And you think it ought to be cut for less than that? Yes.
 12344. You say the men were inexperienced? Yes.
 12345. The men are getting more experienced at that work every year? Yes.
 12346. And there is less trouble every year to get the men you want? Yes. In 1904 I was so disgusted with the way the crop was taken off in 1903 that I did not register again. I took it off with coloured labour, and I had other gangs. I had the cutting done with black labour and the loading done with white labour, and they seemed to go very well that way.
 12347. What did you do in 1905? I did the same.
 12348. Next year you think you will be able to do the cutting and loading with white men only? I think so.
 12349. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you attend as a representative of any farmers' association? Yes. I am a member of the farmers' association here, and I am their representative.
 12350. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything more you want to say? I want to make a suggestion about the deportation of kanakas.
 12351. What about them? Well, I think that the kanaka has been the means of establishing the sugar industry. I think that the "boys" who have been here for about six years will be glad to go home; but those who have been here for, say, twenty years have practically made Queensland their home, and they should be allowed to stay here.
 12352. They have lost touch with the islands? Yes.
 12353. You think they should be allowed to stay? Yes. I think it will reflect very much on the Federal Government if they bundle these "boys" out of the country indiscriminately. Another thing I would suggest is that if the white gangs expelled from amongst their number those who get drunk and neglect their work it would be better for both the employer and the employee.
 12354. *By Mr. Paget*: That is a matter for mutual arrangement among the men who form the gang? Yes. If they made it a rule to expel a man who did not turn up on the Monday through drink, and who neglected his work, it would be much better.
 12355. *By the Chairman*: Some gangs fine for the first offence and expel for the second—Do you think that would be a fair thing? Yes; that would be a fair thing.
 12356. *By Mr. Paget*: We had a witness who said that was done? It has never been done to my knowledge. It might be done in some gangs.

CUM CUM, Native of Malayta, examined:

- Cum Cum. 12357. *By the Chairman*: You came here in 1887? Yes.
 22 May, 1906. 12358. You married? Yes.
 12359. What name island your wife come from? Burra Burra.
 12360. Any children? One pickaninny.
 12361. You want to go back to your island? Yes.
 12362. You think your countrymen kill your wife? No. Missionary longa my country.
 12363. You missionary "boy"? Yes.
 12364. *By Mr. Nielson*: What name your "passage"? Qui.
 12365. *By the Chairman*: You think you take your wife longa Qui, very good? Yes.
 12366. *By Mr. Nielson*: What you want to talk here to-day? I say you want to send 'em "boy" home altogether you send him free and not ask him to pay his passage.
 12367. You work now? Yes; I work for a Chinaman.
 12368. Have you an agreement? Yes.
 12369. Suppose ship come to Townsville, he very good? Yes. If I finish my time I go home.
 12370. When do you finish? Close up Christmas.

TARRIE, a Native of Aoba, examined:

- Tarrie. 12371. *By the Chairman*: You came here on the 4th April, 1891? Yes.
 22 May, 1906. 12372. You married? Yes.
 12373. You work now? No.
 12374. You walk about? Yes.
 12375. *By Mr. Nielson*: You want to go home? Yes.
 12376. Missus too? Yes.
 12377. When agreement finish? Four months ago.
 12378. What for you no go home last time ship come? One ship come to Bundaberg, but I no like to go.
 12379. Suppose ship come to Lucinda Point you go? I want to know about the passage to go home. The master paid £5 before, and I want to know about it this time.
 12380. You no like pay passage? No. Suppose I have to pay passage, I no go. If Government like to turn us out, then no more black labour in Queensland.
 12381. *By Mr. Paget*: You think that if the Government turn "boys" out they should pay passage? Yes. If they don't pay my passage, I no go home. When I was in Bundaberg eighteen years ago they tried to turn us out; but now this Government say we have to go and not have any "boy" in Queensland.
 12382. *By the Chairman*: You got pickaninny? No.
 12383. You missionary "boy"? Yes.

TALLER, Pacific Islander, examined :

12884. *By the Chairman* : What island do you belong to? Santo.
 12885. *By Mr. Nielson* : You want to go home? Yes.
 12886. *By the Chairman* : Are you married? Yes.
 12887. *By Mr. Nielson* : Santo woman? Yes.
 12888. You working now? Yes; me work longa Mr. Payard.
 12889. When your agreement finish? Close up Christmas.
 12890. You want to go home then? Yes. Suppose schooner come to Townsville, me go home.
 12891. You missionary "boy"? Yes.
 12892. *By Mr. Paget* : You got some ground and grow cane? Yes; but my ground got no water, so I can't stop.
 12893. How much ground you got? Seven acres.
 12894. Where is your ground? Ground belong Mr. Payard.

Taller.
 22 May, 1906.

ALLY KEENA, Pacific Islander, examined :

12895. *By Mr. Paget* : What island do you belong to? Santo.
 12896. You come to Queensland in the "Empresa," in 1893? Yes.
 12897. *By Mr. Nielson* : You married? Yes—native of Queensland.
 12898. You want to go home? Yes; suppose you let wife and pickaninny go too.
 12899. Suppose you go longa Santo you all right? Yes.
 12900. *By the Chairman* : How many pickaninny? Two.
 12901. Suppose they no let your wife go, you want to stop in Queensland? Yes. Suppose she go, I go.
 12902. Suppose she stop, you want to stop too? Yes.
 12903. *By Mr. Nielson* : Suppose Government longa Santo say your Mary can't go there, you want to stop here? No; I want to go home.
 12904. *By Mr. Paget* : But suppose big Government longa Santo say you no take Mary longa Santo, you want to stop with your Mary and pickaninny longa Queensland? No; I want to go home. Me take pickaninny and mother too.

Ally Keena.
 22 May, 1906.

JEMIMA, Half Caste Aboriginal Native of Queensland, and Wife of Ally Keena, examined :

12905. *By the Chairman* : Are you married to Ally Keena? Yes.
 12906. Are you a native of the Burdekin district? Yes.
 12907. *By Mr. Nielson* : Your husband says you want to go to Santo with him? Yes, I want to go too. I can't leave him. I must go with him.
 12908. When did he tell you first that he wanted to go home? Not very long ago.
 12909. How long have you been married? Five years.
 12910. If he wants to go home and you want to go too, you tell him to make application to Sergeant Fraser, and he will write to the Government and find out if the Government in Santo will let you go there? Plenty more natives go to the islands.
 12911. Do you know some that have gone? Yes.

Jemima.
 22 May, 1906.

TARRIM DOOLEY, Pacific Islander, examined :

12912. *By the Chairman* : What island you belong to? Aoba.
 12913. *By Mr. Paget* : You been stop here twelve years? Yes.
 12914. You married? Yes—girl longa Queensland.
 12915. You married longa church? No; Mr. Fraser marry me.
 12916. Your wife's name is Topsy? Yes; she half-caste aboriginal.
 12917. *By Mr. Nielson* : You want to go home? Yes. Suppose Government not pay passage, I stop here.
 12918. Missus here? Yes. If she not go, I stop here.
 12919. Missus want to go to Aoba? Yes. She say, suppose Government make me go, she go; suppose Government not let her go, me stop here.
 12920. Suppose you want to go home and missus want to go too, you ask Mr. Fraser write letter to Government? Thank you.

Tarrim Dooley.
 22 May, 1906.

FERRUGIE, Pacific Islander, examined :

12921. *By the Chairman* : What island you belong to? Tanna.
 12922. How long have you been in Queensland? Since 1852.
 12923. You married? Yes. I marry Aoba woman.
 12924. Any pickaninny? Yes; three boys and three girls.
 12925. Suppose you take wife longa Tanna, man Tanna kill her? No; can't kill her.
 12926. You want to go home? Yes, I go home.
 12927. *By Mr. Nielson* : Missus want to go Tanna too? Yes.
 12928. *By the Chairman* : Pickaninny too? Yes.
 12929. You missionary "boy"? Yes.
 12930. *By Mr. Nielson* : You know plenty missionary stop longa Tanna? Yes.
 12931. *By the Chairman* : Your agreement finished? Finish in December.
 12932. *By Mr. Nielson* : Suppose woman longa you go longa Tanna, man Tanna cross longa her? No.
 12933. Not cross longa you? No.
 12934. You think missionary look after you? Yes.

Ferrugie.
 22 May, 1906.

(Ayr.)

WEDNESDAY, 23 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) |

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

GEORGE CAMPBELL, Cane Farmer, examined:

- G. Campbell. 12935. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your farm? I have got 228 acres under cane.
 12936. Are you registered for the bonus? No.
 23 May, 1906. 12937. You are employing coloured labour? I have got both black and white labour at present.
 12938. What substitute do you propose to find for the kanakas after the end of this year? Well, that is more than I can say at the present time, for it is an utter impossibility for me to go on with white labour at the present time.
 12939. Will you give us your evidence straight out, as you know what you intend to tell us? I have had considerable experience with white men. The first season I registered for the bonus I had considerable trouble in getting the crop off.
 12940. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many acres did you register? Between 80 and 90 acres the first year.
 12941. *By the Chairman*: You had a difficulty in getting the crop off? Yes. The labour was not satisfactory.
 12942. In what way? Nearly every day they would come in and get drunk, and they would be locked up. They would put me to all sorts of annoyances. We used to be short handed at every pay, and we could not depend on them at all.
 12943. How often do you pay? Monthly. As soon as I got the crop off I went back to black labour again.
 12944. And you have continued with black labour ever since? Yes, with the exception of last year when I let a contract to white men for loading.
 12945. At what terms? At the usual terms, 1s a ton for putting on the trucks. I laid the tram line for them, and they only had to load it up. The consequence was that when I was in the middle of the work they struck work. The company sent out a number of trucks to the different farmers, and they sent me forty trucks. I told the men they would have to go ahead and load more cane than they were doing. That was on Saturday evening, and on Monday morning they came to me and said they would not work for me any longer unless I gave them a bigger screw. I would not raise the pay, and I paid the lot off. There were ten of them altogether. I had to go on loading with Chinese until I got another gang of white men. This second gang of white men pulled through the season, but they were not at all satisfactory. They never got up to the proper amount that we had to do per day. They kept overdrawing their accounts all the time, and at the last pay they had nothing to draw. I gave the contractor some money to pay his men, and it cost me £40 more than the contract was worth. He had nothing coming to him on the last pay as he had drawn it all previously. That cost me £40 altogether at the rate of 4d. per ton.
 12946. Was 1s. a ton the ruling rate? Yes; for coloured labour.
 12947. But not for white labour? We were not registered. For unregistered cane the farmers get it done for 1s. a ton. Even some who are registered get it done for that. It is according to the quality of the men you get. One farmer with a white gang gave them the same money, and they averaged 9s. and 10s. a day out of it.
 12948. *By Mr. Nielson*: A good deal depends on the crop? Mine was a very heavy crop, and went 40 tons to the acre.
 12949. How far did they have to carry the cane? Six drills 5 feet 6 inches apart.
 12950. *By Mr. Paget*: That is the ordinary distance? Yes.
 12951. *By the Chairman*: The other farmers succeeded in getting their cane loaded at that price with white labour? Yes. Mine was a mixed gang of miners. They used to pick up two sticks at a time instead of taking an armful. They did not like the job, and they were not willing workers at all.
 12952. Was there a scarcity of labour last year? Yes; after this gang gave up the contract it took me a week or ten days to get men to fill their places as they came along.
 12953. You got them in a week? Yes; I picked them as they came to me. Only for that I would have been short-handed.
 12954. Have you formed any opinion as to what the labour supply is likely to be this year? I believe it will be very scarce this year, because there is a great deal of cane registered, and four times the number of men will be required this year than were wanted last year.
 12955. You are aware that 150 men are ready to come over from Chartered Towers as soon as their preence is required? I have heard of it; but they are not the right class. They are not agriculturists. We want farmers for this job. They do not like this work at all, and when they start they get discontented, and give it up. The right class of men are very scarce. They do not seem to want work. They want the money to go and have a drink. That is my experience of them.
 12956. Your complaint regarding the white labour is chiefly on account of their intemperate habits, and not that they are "wasters"? In a great many cases it is this intemperate business that upsets them; but a great number of the men we get here are not used to agricultural work at all. They are stockmen. It is quite a different thing to work in a cane field to what it is driving horses. Then, again, the work in the mines is not as hard as the work in the cane fields, as in the mines they work shorter hours.
 12957. *By Mr. Paget*: Were the gang working on the co-operative principle? They were at the start; but I gave the second contract to one man, and he paid the men 2s. a week and found and 5s. a week bonus if they went through the season. He fed them well and gave them every chance, but they did not work hard enough to make it pay. Instead of loading 8 or 9 tons a day they would do 4 or 5 tons and sometimes not that. The cane was a good heavy crop and they had every advantage.

12958. The men who were working for other farmers were earning 9s. and 10s. a day at the same rates? Yes. G. Campbell. Mr. Charles Gray told me that his white gang made between 9s. and 10s. a day, and they were getting exactly the same price. I never gave more for loading than 1s. a ton, and in 1886, with Japanese labour, I got my crop cut and loaded for 11d. a ton. These Japanese were making about 7s. 2d. a day at Kalamia, and I gave them a contract to cut and load my crop at 11d. a ton, and they averaged about 27s. a week each.

12959. *By the Chairman:* What would you have to pay white labour now for that work? It would cost about 3s. 6d. a ton. Last year I had twelve Chinamen cutting at 26s. a week, and I loaded with white men. I had the kanakas working on the tramlines. If I have to let it to white men, I do not expect to get it done for less than 3s. 6d. a ton; but it is questionable whether we shall have enough labour to go through the season.

12960. What about next year? I do not intend to plant any more after this year unless something is done to give us a guarantee that we can get labour at a reasonable rate. Sugar-growing will not pay extra big wages; and they are going to pull down the price of cane on us by 2s. 6d. a ton on account of the extra excise put on the sugar this year.

12961. *By Mr. Nielson:* Will you be any worse off than you are this year? I believe we shall get 14s. a ton this year, and, according to all accounts, the company is going to cut us down 2s. 6d. a ton next year.

12962. But you will get so much more bonus? The bounty is nothing in comparison with cheap coloured labour. I would rather have cheap labour than a bounty of 8s. or 9s. a ton, because you want labour that you can depend upon. If you are busy and all your men strike or go away and get drunk, you are left at a standstill; and that has been my experience ever since I have had anything to do with white labour.

12963. I suppose you intend to carry on with Chinamen then? This year I intend to let a contract for cutting to Chinamen, and I shall try to load with my kanakas. After this year I have not the least idea how we are going to get on. I am planting about 80 acres this year, but I do not intend to plant any more until I see how things are going to turn out. It will be an utter impossibility to make sugar-growing pay if we have to pay white men 30s. a week for weeding, and trashing, and that sort of thing.

12964. But has that been suggested by anybody? The idea of the union at the present time is that they will not work for less than 30s. in the busy season and 25s. in the off season.

12965. Is it not a fact that you are only paying £1 a week in this district? I am paying from £1 to 22s. 6d. a week for ploughmen.

12966. That is as cheap as you would get the work done anywhere in Queensland? You will get it done on the Downs for from 15s. to 18s. a week, according to my experience.

12967. *By the Chairman:* How long ago was that? A good while ago.

12968. Thirty years ago? Not quite.

12969. Well, thirty years ago you could not get a ploughman for 15s. a week? It was some time in the seventies.

12970. *By Mr. Nielson:* They have never paid less than £1 a week in the Bundaberg district during the last twenty years? I consider £1 a week and found is a fair wage for an ordinary working man.

12971. *By the Chairman:* We had evidence from a good style of working man yesterday that he considered £1 a week and found all the year round was good pay? I would want to put on about fifteen men all the year round; and it would cost me nearly 10s. a week to feed them, and that would amount to a considerable sum by the end of the year.

12972. So would your crop? It is just a question whether the crop would repay the expenditure, because there is a lot of expense in connection with irrigation and other things that they have not to go in for in other places.

12973. *By Mr. Nielson:* Does not irrigation pay? It just about balances itself. It costs me about £10 a week to irrigate.

12974. *By Mr. Paget:* It is an insurance against total loss? Yes.

12975. *By the Chairman:* If it costs you £10 a week for irrigation, you get much more for your cane? Yes.

12976. Then it makes a certainty of your crop? Yes; but an irrigation plant is costly and it is costly to run it. I had to pay two Chinamen 20s. a week each last year to look after the water going through my pump.

12977. *By Mr. Nielson:* Still you say it pays? It costs me about £100 a month to run my little place. If I had to pay much more, the cane would not pay for it, and I cannot run the farm at a loss.

12978. How many tons of cane did you cut last year? 2,494 tons off about 150 acres.

12979. *By Mr. Paget:* That was about 16 tons to the acre? Yes. 80 tons of plant cane averaged over 40 tons to the acre, but I had ratoons that were not irrigated, and they only went a few tons to the acre.

12980. *By the Chairman:* The irrigated cane gave you a good profit over and above the cost of irrigation? Yes; it pays to irrigate. You may get a little money out of it, but it costs a terrible lot of money. To begin with, it costs over £1,000 to put in an irrigation plant.

12981. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many acres will that irrigate? In a real dry season it will do no more than 150 acres.

12982. *By Mr. Paget:* Water is very easily procurable here? I am pumping out of a permanent lagoon. There is plenty of water, but it is very difficult to get it on to all the land as it is broken. If something is not done in the way of letting us get reliable labour, we cannot carry on.

12983. *By the Chairman:* Are you a member of the Farmers' Association? Yes.

12984. Is the association taking steps to advertise the wants of the district in the South? I am not certain.

12985. Do you not think it is the place of such an association to take action of that description? Most decidedly it ought to be done. If we could get men from the South they would be preferable to men from the North. They are a bet or class of men altogether.

12986. Do you know that for the last couple of months there have been streams of men going up North signed on to work up there? Yes. Mr. Harrison, who contracted to take off my cane last year, went up to the Mossman to trash, and I see that he has been taking out warrants for the arrest of some of the men since they went up.

- G. Campbell. 12987. *By Mr. Nielson*: Did you ever hear of a warrant being taken out for the arrest of a kanaka? Very seldom. During thirty years' experience of kanakas I have never had any trouble with them.
- 23 May, 1906. 12988. Did you never hear of a "boy" being fined for absconding from his hired service? Very seldom. We can depend upon them.
12989. *By the Chairman*: You have had bad seasons here? Yes.
12990. You never let a bad season beat you? Not exactly; but I have seen a period of eight or nine months without a shower of rain to do any good.
12991. Then you started irrigation to enable you to cope with droughts? If it had not been for that we would have had no cane.
12992. You have to devise something now to provide yourselves with suitable labour? Other districts like the Mossman and the Johnstone River do not require to irrigate, so they can afford to give a better price for labour. This is one of the dryest belts in Queensland and we have to irrigate. That costs us a lot of money and reduces the returns from the cane.
12993. *By Mr. Nielson*: What is the average annual rainfall here? It is not regular. I have seen it rain as much as 90 inches in three months, but that has not happened since 1896.
12994. What do you think it costs you per acre to irrigate? It is according to the season. If we have a dry season we have to irrigate three or four times, but if we have a fairly good season, then a couple of irrigations will do. I would have to go into figures to show what it costs.
12995. You cannot say what it costs to put 1 inch on per acre? No; because the land, as a rule, is a bit broken in places, and it gets far too much. In some places it gets from 3 inches to 6 inches. If you had nice level country, you could regulate it nicely, but it breaks away when the country is broken.
12996. What did it cost you last year to irrigate 8 acres? I gave it three waterings. I was pumping altogether three months. I had six men on, getting 26s. a week, besides the engine-driver and the men chopping and carting wood for the engine. It would take me some time to make it up before I could give you the correct amount.
12997. I am a bit interested in this sort of thing, and I would be glad if you could give me an idea of the cost? They would average 6 to 8 acres a day, and give it a good soaking.
12998. *By the Chairman*: Is there anything else you wish to say? I am in doubt about getting my crop off this year. It is a question whether I shall be able to procure enough Chinamen. I am not registered. After this year I do not think I shall plant again, unless there is something definite about the supply of labour. It is no good if I have to spend money and see the cane lie on the ground.
12999. As regards labour, that is a matter your association have in their own hands, and if they send down South they can get plenty of labour? The labour will be scarce, and there will be strikes every week here. I have had a long experience in the cane business—thirty years of it—and it is generally that way.

WILLIAM PAYARD, Cane Farmer, examined:

- W. Payard. 13000. *By the Chairman*: What is the area of your holding? 1,000 acres freehold and 1,000 acres leasehold.
- 23 May, 1906. 13001. How much have you under cane? 400 acres.
13002. Are you registered? Yes; this year for the first time.
13003. Will this be your first experience of white labour for ordinary field work? Yes.
13004. Have you employed any additional labourers since you registered? I have always had twelve men employed as engine-drivers, and that sort of thing.
13005. But for ordinary chipping? Yes; I have a gang on now.
13006. What do you pay? £1 a week and found in the off season.
13007. Can you always get men at that figure? I have had no trouble so far.
13008. What has been your experience with the men you have got? I always have good men, and they give me satisfaction.
13009. Do you cook for them? Yes. One cook does the lot. They have the same tucker as I have myself.
13010. Has not that got a lot to do with the fact that you are able to get and keep men? Yes; I treat them well. They say that a man has got to die before they can get a job on my place, as those who get there stop so long. That is self-praise, but that is what they say about me.
13011. Do you think there will be any trouble this year in getting labour? Yes. I may mention that I am vice-president of the association here.
13012. *By Mr. Paget*: You represent the farmers' association here? No; I am vice-president, but I appear on my own behalf. When we were offered the chance to register in January last, I registered like a number of others. I went to Townsville and put an advertisement in the paper for men. I met sixty odd men in answer to the advertisement one night in Townsville. Most of them had been down here and they were satisfied that the Burdekin was the best place to work at canecutting. I have had letters from the Tweed and Richmond Rivers for canecutters. I thought there would be a scarcity, but it seems there is going to be a good supply. I let my contract to a local mau and he has got local men to do the work, so I pass all the letters on to others who want men.
13013. What price have you let your contract at? 4s. 9d. per ton, to cut, load, and put it on the company's trucks.
13014. You provide horse and drays? Yes. They put 2½ to 3 tons on a truck. The tram line runs right through my paddock, and I lend them the dray to take the cane up on to the loading banks, so loading is an easy matter. At the same time there is a vast difference in the cost of growing cane with black and white labour. I am giving 4s. 9d. per ton now. For fifteen years my average cost price to cut and load was 1s. 3d. per ton.
13015. *By the Chairman*: A difference of 3s. 6d.? Yes. It is a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. It is no use the farmers talking about giving 25s. a week all the year round, because it is not in it.
13016. *By Mr. Paget*: Not with the bounty? There is a difference of 3s. 6d. per ton in the cutting without the bounty. We get 4s. 8d. bonus now, but the difference between the cost of growing with black and white is 8s. per ton. We are supposed to get 6s. next year.

13017. It will be 7s. next year? I hope so. You hear a lot of talk about the farmers being better off ^{W. Payard.} now owing to federation, as federation has brought about the difference in the price of cane. That is all a lot of tommyrot. It is not federation that makes it better. It is the rise in the price of cane. We 23 May, 1906. were getting 11s 8d. per ton for our cane, and now we are getting 15s. per ton without registration.

13018. *By Mr. Paget*: The last witness said 14s. ? We also get 1s. bonus. That is where the difference comes in.

13019. *By the Chairman*: How much cane will you get this year? Something over 5,000 tons.

13020. Do you irrigate? Yes.

13021. Are you satisfied with the results from irrigation? Yes; I am quite satisfied.

13022. In spite of the outlay? Yes.

13023. Your association have not taken any steps as an association to do anything about labour? No, not as yet.

13024. Do you not think it is advisable they should do so? Yes; they should do so. We had a gentleman here from Charters Towers, a Mr. Thompson, and he gave us a list of unemployed, so I do not think there is any occasion to go South for men. He gave us the names of twenty-five cane-cutters and field hands. These will give us the number required.

13025. A man need not be an agricultural labourer to load cane? Not necessarily, if he is willing to work.

13026. *By Mr. Paget*: You have 100 kanakas in this place at the present time and their places will have to be filled? That is where the trouble will come if there is any trouble. For myself I could get forty practical cane-cutters from the Tweed and Clarence Rivers. I have also had letters from Mossman and the Herbert and Johnstone Rivers making application for work here as they prefer this district to any other.

13027. *By the Chairman*: Were you able to give any information to the men who wrote from the Clarence and Tweed Rivers? Yes; I referred them to different people. Two of the gangs went up North. I reply to every letter, and tell them how things stand, and I am sorry I cannot take them.

13028. You do not talk as if you are apprehensive of the future? No; there is no use meeting the devil half-way.

13029. It is not going to worry you? I will not be worried. If we do not get a fair price for cane I will go out of it.

13030. Have you diminished your planting so far? We have five years to struggle on. The dairying industry is a thing that will take on here. I have my eyes on some stock. If the bonus is discontinued the sugar industry will go down, and the dairy business will take its place.

13031. *By Mr. Paget*: You are speaking without bias? Yes.

13032. *By the Chairman*: Do you employ any coloured labour? I have thirteen kanakas in my employ now.

13033. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think it would be a good thing if land could be obtained for the purpose of settling workers in the sugar districts? I have some doubt about that, because they will eventually become farmers on their own hook, and will want labour themselves.

13034. That would be a very good thing? For them, but not for the farmer who requires them.

13035. Would it not be a good thing for the country? Certainly; but you were asking me about getting labour for myself.

13036. The experience in the South is that many men who take up ordinary 160-acre selections have had to go out and work for several years until they have fulfilled their conditions? I had to do it myself.

13037. Is it not your experience that for every man who comes into a district another follows him? That is true.

13038. The more settlers you get, the greater the population you will attract? So far as our district is concerned, I am afraid it will be a hard matter to get suitable land to settle them on. It is no good putting them on land that will not support them.

13039. Do you not think that many men who come to work here in the season would be glad to settle down? A great number have made inquiries.

13040. Are there any Crown lands available within a reasonable distance of here? Not that I am aware of. Part of Inkerman run is being thrown open to selection, but I pity the poor wretches who get on to it. I hear Mr. Kenna is talking about the beautiful land, but he knows as little about the land as the land knows about him. It is not even second-class grazing country. Out of the whole 130 square miles I do not think there are 610 acres fit for cultivation.

13041. *By Mr. Paget*: Mr. Howes said that there was a piece of suitable land at the Barklekin crossing, about 4 miles from here? I think he must have been referring to the Inkerman lands. You might get 10 or 12 acres in a little corner, but you will get no great area anywhere.

13042. *By Mr. Nielson*: Could not persons like yourself who want to try the experiment of getting labour into the district, and who have large areas that they are not cultivating, cut up what they do not require into small blocks? If they are in the same fix as I am they could not, because I have every acre under cultivation that is fit to grow cane. The rest is grazing country, and I have horses and cattle to look after.

13043. But there is any amount of land fit for cultivation that is under grass at the present time? There is another obstacle in the road. A lot of very good land has been bought from the Pioneer Company by men who have taken it up to make money. Then the milling power is not there.

13044. My object in asking you these questions about land is to see if it is not possible to settle the labour in the district during the off season? A great deal can be done in that direction. For instance, we have a lot of irrigation to do, there is firewood to cut, and lots of other things. We may not be able to find employment for all of the men we employ during the harvesting, but we can find work for the best of them, provided they do not want too much wages. There is no good paying 20s. to get 18s. back.

13045. At the rate of wages you are paying for casual labour in the off season do you think the majority of the harvesters could be employed all the year round? I do.

13046. If the cane-growers laid themselves out they could find profitable work? They will have to, because firewood and other things are required.

13047. Profitable work that can be done? Whether it is profitable or not it has got to be done.

- W. Payard. 13048. *By Mr. Paget*: Your kanakas are doing general cultivation work? Yes. I have done all my planting with them so far, with the exception of the cane that is registered. I have 1,000 tons of cane to cut with them and 1,000 tons with white labour.
- 23 May, 1906. 13049. How many white men do you think it will take to supply the place of the kanakas you now have? I think it will take equally as many. It might take one or two less.
13050. What do you consider is the cost of your islanders per week? I am paying some 3s. a day and find themselves, and I am paying the majority of them 10s. a week. Their food costs 8s. a week, so that they cost nearly 3s. a day.
13051. What would be the average cost of the white men? Their food costs 15s. a week, although the Government do not allow that, and they cost me 6s. a day.
13052. So that they cost you just about twice as much as the kanakas? Yes.
13053. *By the Chairman*: Do you pay your men 20s. a week and found, wet and dry? Yes.
13054. You do not stop the wages for wet days? Not unless the wet weather lasts for a week at a time. When it is like yesterday it is not worth while stopping it.
13055. If it lasts for a week, what about tucker? I feed them just the same.

(Townsville.)

THURSDAY, 24 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) |

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

GEORGE WASHINGTON YOUNG, Inspector of Pacific Islanders and Officer in charge of the Labour Bureau, examined:

- G. W. Young. 13056. *By the Chairman*: There are no indented islanders in this district? There are a few walk.
- 24 May, 1906. abouts.
13057. Whose names you do not know? I cannot tell you their names. There are none of them under agreement.
13058. How does the Government Labour Bureau work—Is it in active operation? It is. I have had the pleasure of placing a considerable number of men on the plantations in various places.
13059. Where is your office? At the back of the old Custom House.
13060. Is there any difficulty in a stranger finding where your office is? I think not.
13061. Is there anything to designate what your office is—anything in the way of a notice-board? There is painting on it, of course.
13062. What is the average number of applications you have to register, say, in a week? Forty or fifty.
13063. You have applications from plantation owners, and employers of labour generally? Yes; and farmers, too.
13064. You have had a fair amount of success in placing labour? Yes.
13065. Can you suggest anything that would enable you to conduct the bureau with even still greater effect? Yes. I want assistance very much. There is no one but myself, and I am master and man. I should also like to be able to advertise my wants, but I cannot do it.
13066. *By Mr. Paget*: Your wants in the shape of labour required? Yes.
13067. *By the Chairman*: That is to say, if an employer requires a particular class of labour you would like to advertise it? Yes; and get him the labour at once. If twenty men are wanted on a plantation at night I could let them know by the morning; but, at present, I have to go to my friends all over the place. That is all a matter of labour.
13068. And a matter of inefficiency? Yes; it is a difficult matter to get the men just when you want them in that way. There are two or three people in town who have been very kind, and help me all they can.
13069. You have several other offices to fill which occupy your time? I have numerous other offices to fill.
13070. It would be of advantage to you to have an assistant? I would like to get a boy here to break him in.
13071. You would like a probationer? I would like to get a lad I could teach, one that would stop and go on with the work, and not one to keep for a few weeks and then let him go away.
13072. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are the applications for work kept in a conspicuous place where everybody can see them? I keep them in my books.
13073. Would it not be of assistance to men if you posted them up? There is no doubt it would.
13074. Would it not be of assistance also to the efficient working of your bureau to have periodical interchanges of statistics with other bureaus? I find I have got quite enough to do without any exchanges. I am at it all day long.
13075. I mean provided you had sufficient clerical assistance? It would be a great assistance and a great help. I am often asked for married couples without encumbrances, but it is difficult to get them, and an interchange with another bureau might show me where they could be obtained.
13076. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you issue Government relief? I do.
13077. When you issue relief to a man who is a traveller, is his name entered into the same register as that in which you enter the names of men seeking work? It used to be, but I do not encourage it now. I have not issued rations for two years.
13078. Have you received complaints from these men that they will not apply for work because it looks as if they are seeking relief? I never hear any complaints of that kind, but I often hear complaints because I will not give them rations.

13079. *By Mr. Nielson*: From your experience, do you think it would be a good thing to keep the issue G. W. Young. of relief separate from the employment part, and let one official attend to the issue of relief only? Perhaps so; but so far I have been able to manage it. If it increases I will require someone to help me. There 24 May, 1906.

13080. *By Mr. Paget*: There are a number of men who do not want it to be thought that they are going for relief when they are going for employment, and, in their interests, do you not think it would be better to keep the two departments separate? It would be an excellent thing. The issue of relief to travellers was dreadfully abused, and that is the reason that the thing has been comparatively stopped.

13081. *By the Chairman*: Most of the relief you issue is to residents in the town? To women and children. I do not encourage men at all. I put them out in the country to work, and get them billets if I can. The relief is then issued to the women and children until the husband can send the money down.

13082. Do you issue railway passes to these men? Yes.

13083. What success have you had in getting the railway passes repaid? Very poor. They promise to repay and are willing to sign an undertaking, but not 90 per cent. of them pay for their passes. The issue of railway passes has stopped now except to old men and women from the hospital or going to Dunwich.

13084. Can you give me any idea of what number of unemployed there are in this district at present? There are very few at present. Most of the men have gone to the Cloncurry Railway extension. A great number have gone to the cane fields cutting firewood in readiness for the boilers at crushing time.

13085. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think many men have left here in the last couple of weeks for the Northern districts? I know several.

13086. Would they be residents or men passing through? Men passing through calling for rations. I know one or two who are waiting for the meatworks to start here, and I have endeavoured to get them to go to the cane fields instead of waiting for the meatworks.

13087. *By Mr. Paget*: If you get applications from the Northern sugar centres for labour, have you any difficulty in getting steamer passes for men? No; they give me authority to get a ticket from the various shipping companies, and I give the shipping company the voucher.

13088. And the employee gives an undertaking that he will refund the passage? That is a matter between the employer and the man.

13089. But does the employer give it? He gives us his promise. No undertaking is ever asked from an employer.

13090. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you take up the position of agent for the employer in engaging men, and make a binding contract with them? I make no engagement whatever. The employer writes and asks for twenty men. I get them, and get a ticket from Burns, Philp, and Co., and give Burns, Philp, and Co. the voucher. I make no agreement whatever.

13091. *By the Chairman*: In that case there is a possibility of the men not suiting the employer? I am not responsible for that, although I do my best in getting the best men I can.

13092. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think it advisable for officers in charge of labour bureaux to act as agents for employers of labour the same as the private registry offices? No; I hardly think that. There are plenty of private registry offices in the town, and they are paid for it.

13093. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you aware that the bureau officers do it in Brisbane? I am not aware of it.

13094. I understand such a system is carried out in Brisbane? To sign agreements?

13095. No; to act as agents? I act as a go-between, but not as an agent.

13096. *By the Chairman*: Have any instances occurred where the men have not turned out to be competent men? Not one. All the men I secured turned out very well and gave every satisfaction. I may say that I have issued rations to men and found they go outside the town and eat them and come back again. I recommended that the rations be knocked off, and I was told to act as I pleased in the matter.

13097. *By Mr. Paget*: You give relief to destitute cases? Yes; but I am careful, as I do not believe in the Government being robbed. It is about time that the railway pass system was also stopped.

JAMES ANDERSON, Manager of the Federal Co-operative Newspaper Company, examined:

13098. *By the Chairman*: What are you? Manager of the Federal Co-operative Newspaper Company. J. Anderson.

13099. On what subject do you wish to be heard? In reference to men in the sugar fields. We have supplied numbers of gangs to farmers and millowners in the North, and the men have all turned out satisfactorily. Men who were never employed in sugar-farming before—practically men thrown out of work in offices and that sort of thing—remained there, and many of them have taken their wives and families up. Every time we have had an application for men, we have been able to supply them. There has always been a surplusage in Townsville of labour for the North. 24 May, 1906.

13100. What is the state of the labour market just at present? There is a large number of unemployed in Townsville to-day.

13101. *By Mr. Paget*: How many are there? I suppose you could get fifty men if you required them.

13102. *By the Chairman*: Would they be reliable workers? Yes.

13103. Are the men in the habit of registering their names at the Government Labour Bureau? I have sent men there, and in every case when Mr. Young has been able to give them work he has done so.

13104. Then the Labour Bureau is working well, so far as your experience goes? Yes.

13105. Have you sent any men to Mr. Young lately? Yes.

13106. I ask you because Mr. Young is not aware of there being any unemployed about just now? I have sent men to him this week. The meatworks started last week, and there were numbers of men turned away from there.

13107. You are aware that preparations are being made for the cane harvesting, which will commence in about a month? Yes.

13108. Would it not be well for the men who are unemployed to make their way towards the district where they are likely to find employment? Most of the men are not in a position to pay their way.

13109. Some of them might walk? Yes; but they have wives and families here, and they do not care about going up there to look for work.

- J. Anderson. 13110. *By Mr. Paget*: You are speaking of local residents? Yes. There is a large number of men working on the wharves whose earnings only average from 15s. to £1 a week; and, if they got constant employment in the sugar districts, they would shift their wives and families up.
- 24 May, 1906. 13111. *By the Chairman*: Would they do such field work as chipping? Yes.
13112. What wages would they expect? I think most of them would be pleased to get 30s. a week and rations. I have a letter from a man who worked in the sugar fields last year, and he has gone up again to work. As he could not be present himself, he asked me to hand in a letter to the Commission. [*Letter handed in to the Chairman.*]
13113. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is there a branch of the Sugar Workers' Union in Townsville? No.
13114. Is there any industrial union here? No.
13115. Is your paper in correspondence with the various Sugar Workers' Unions? Yes; and we learn that in every place there is a surplussage of labour.
13116. *By the Chairman*: Do you know that the men at Ayr are perfectly satisfied with 20s. a week and found in the slack season for field work such as you describe? Yes.
13117. You suggested 30s. a week just now? I say the men are entitled to that.
13118. *By Mr. Paget*: What do the men consider they are entitled to for cutting and loading in the crushing season? They consider they are worth 8s. a day and find themselves.
13119. How many hours? Nine hours a day.
13120. *By the Chairman*: Nine hours inclusive of "smoke-hos!" or nine hours' solid work? "Smoke-hos!" of twenty minutes to come out of the nine hours. That does not include meal hours.

(Townsville.)

FRIDAY, 25 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

Mr. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) |

Mr. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

Right Rev. GEORGE HORSFALL FRODSHAM, Anglican Bishop of North Queensland, examined:

- Right Rev. G 11. Frodsbam. 13121. *By the Chairman*: I think it would be better if you gave your evidence in your own way? I wish to give evidence particularly with reference to clauses 1 and 2 of the terms of the Commission. I do not consider that I am qualified to express an opinion on the industrial side of the question, although I would like to say something about its bearing on child labour. If you will allow me, I should like to speak, first of all, on the condition of the Queensland kanakas, and, secondly, upon the subject of deportation. I speak more particularly with reference to the members of the Anglican Church. My diocese reaches from below Mackay in the South to just this side of Port Douglas in the North, therefore it includes the majority of the kanakas at present working in Queensland. I am not quite sure how many there are at the present moment; but I think there are about 500 or 1,000 who are members of the Anglican Church. These are mostly found among those who have been for some time resident in Queensland. I have a school at Mackay, the Selwyn Mission, and large missions at Ingham on the Herbert River, and also on the Johnstone River. There are classes for South Sea Islanders in every part of the diocese. I do not think you will ask me to dwell at any length upon the question of the good character of the kanakas. Certainly when they become Christians they are really most excellently behaved citizens. I feel that that is a subject upon which all should pretty well agree. They appear to have a genius for religion, and not merely of a missionary type, but also of a moral type, and they take very great interest in their schools and in their church. At the same time it is only fair to say that I have noticed signs of deterioration in the kanakas, and they appear to have become more difficult to manage. This, I think, is largely due to the growing system of walking about looking for work, and in some cases is due to the absence of school teaching. I may mention here as a matter that will come within the scope of the Commission, that the efforts of the Education Department of Queensland in excluding all kanaka children from the Halifax State School because there was a case of leprosy there a couple of years ago is said to be having a bad effect upon the children, and they are becoming more unmanageable. It is a hardship on the children themselves, but I am thinking of the community. I am inclined to think that with regard to these Christian children born in Queensland, if they do not happen to be deported, it will be likely to have a bad effect upon the community. The question is at present before the Minister, and has been before him for some time. The majority of the kanakas are, as you know, unmarried. The married ones, almost without exception, are Christians. I have tried to find out for myself what are the proportions of married people who have been married to women different to their own nationality, but I have not been able to get it.
13122. *By Mr. Paget*: We are getting all those particulars in each district we visit? I was speaking more particularly with regard to the Anglicans. I have some information here which I shall be pleased to lay before you, if you wish to have it, with reference to the Anglican Mission "boys" at Geraldton, and I have tried to find out something about Bowen, Proserpine, and Mackay. [*Document tendered.*]
13123. *By the Chairman*: This will be very useful to us for reference? The only point I wish to make upon the subject is that the majority of the married people are Christians, and a considerable number of them are Anglican Christians. I have been trying for the last three years to find out what the kanaka himself thought about the deportation question. I expected to be able to find out what the kanaka felt upon the subject, but it is by no means an easy matter to get to the bottom of the question. I have personally come to the conclusion that you can make a kanaka say almost anything you like if you put sufficient pressure on him.
13124. That is so with the aborigines? Yes; but not to so great an extent. I believe that the kanaka is much easier to get at than the aborigine, as I have had experience in both, and they are very liable to change. For instance, they seem almost incapable of foreseeing and making provision for any event in the future. They do not seem to be able to weigh reasons. For

instance, what might appear to you to be perfectly trivial to a kanaka would appear to be a weighty reason; and what might seem a weighty reason to you is regarded as just the opposite by the kanaka. In the same way I have noticed that he is not capable of foreseeing any real danger. In fact, in almost every particular they are rather like children in the matter. We have got to think for them a great deal, and act for them, and we must not make the mistake of attaching very much importance to an expression of opinion from them. The first question we want to know is whether the kanakas want to leave, and my conclusion is that the majority of South Sea Islanders in Queensland undoubtedly do wish to return to their islands. A year ago I would have said "all" wished to return, but now a proportion of those who have been for some time in the State wish to remain, at any rate for a time. At the instigation of two or three prominent men in the Commonwealth Parliament, I made inquiries from my clergy and missionaries as to what the kanaka really felt with regard to his own deportation, and this, perhaps, is a type of the rest. One clergyman writes to me as follows:—

Right Rev.
G. H.
Frodsham.

25 May, 1906.

"I have tried to get the names of the 'boys' who wish to remain here after 1907, and I have been interviewing all the 'boys' that I could myself. So far, however, I have not been able to ascertain the names of any wishing to remain. I quite expected to find that some, having settled homes and families, would desire to remain and continue the cultivation of their little farms (leases), and I was rather astonished on interviewing a number of these last week to learn that they had all made up their minds to return to their islands. The principal reason for this seems to be the absence of a white teacher in their midst." That is rather an extraordinary thing. Now, I am inclined to think that a proportion who wish to remain now think that no forcible deportation will be made. According to reports that I have received from my clergy and other agents, I learn that about half the married people in the Mackay district elect to remain for a few years. I am speaking only of Anglians. About 1.5 per cent. in the Geraldton district said that they would rather remain if all the other "boys" remained, but all added that they would prefer to go home with the majority rather than remain with the minority. The "boys" on the Herbert River rather like the idea of being sent back to their islands, and the chief difficulty is one of passage. I give that for what it is worth. I next tried to find out whether the "boys" anticipated any danger themselves in the deportation. I found it was only in a few certain cases that they anticipated any danger. At Ingham and Halifax they seem to have no fear of being murdered, although they say, "of course they might!" That is again the childish point of view in their mind. At Mackay they only appear to be doubtful in the case of married people, but they add—"I have been too long in Australia; my relations are dead, and I have forgotten my people." Others say, "There is no school in my village, or on my island, and my people are wild yet." At Geraldton, I am officially informed, none of the "boys" anticipate trouble when they land at their own homes; but they admit there are islands where "boys," especially those who have transgressed tribal customs, might meet with a distinctly hostile reception. I think that the Melanesians are at the present time suffering considerable hardship through lack of employment. The reason is that they are frittering away their savings either in idleness or in attempting to take up land which they are not fully qualified to cultivate. This is not only a subject upon which reports are made to me, but it is also the basis of a great many letters which I am constantly receiving from kanakas. They are great correspondents, and they always speak of me and write to me as their father. I now wish to read an extract from an official report from Mackay: "They (that is the kanakas) do not know how to work systematically, and the result is that they do not plant sufficient cane to pay expenses. The majority will forfeit their lease and sacrifice everything that belongs to them. Some have already been sent off their leasehold." That is a definite statement, and it is quite within the power of the Commission to find out whether it is true or not.

13125. *By Mr. Nielson:* I should like to do so if you will give me a reference to the source of your information? The report was made to me by Mr. Sage, of the Selwyn Mission, on 15th March, 1906. Of course, I am putting it forward as a privileged report.

13126. My reason for wanting the information is that I am not at all satisfied that the majority of kanakas have had a fair deal in connection with the leases they have taken, or that they have been sufficiently protected? I think that is most admirable. There is another point I would like to bring forward as germane to that. I suppose I am more conversant with the kanakas' point of view than almost anyone in Queensland. There are some who have been deprived of the employment they have been in for many years other than employment on the sugar plantations. I want to give two instances of this.

13127. You must understand that the "boys" who are exempted under the old Queensland Act are also exempted under the Commonwealth Act? That is if they have a certificate of exemption; but a very large number never went through the formality of obtaining a certificate. It was very largely a matter of form; and I do not think that was thoroughly understood by the Commonwealth Government.

13128. *By the Chairman:* You think they ought to be put on the same footing as the "boys" who went through the formality of getting exemption tickets? I do.

13129. *By Mr. Page:* An islander is not entitled to a certificate unless he has been in Queensland about twenty-seven years? That strikes me as being a hardship.

13130. Under the Act of 1884 a "boy" was entitled to a certificate if he had been five years in this country? Well, as we are now considering the question of humanity, I consider twenty-seven years is excessive.

13131. *By Mr. Nielson:* It is a question which deserves consideration—There are "boys" who have certificates, and there are numbers of others who might have had certificates if they had applied for them—as to the humanitarian aspect of the case in regard to other "boys," each case must be regarded on its own merits? If my memory serves me, I was asked by Mr. Watson, the leader of the Federal Labour Party, during the course of a conversation, to be sure and get definite information and not deal in generalities.

13132. *By the Chairman:* We are preparing a return showing all "boys" who have been here for ten years and upwards? May I give you these particular cases?

13133. Certainly? They are the cases of two "boys" both of whom have personally approached me. One is Robert Swallow, of Malayta, who arrived in 1884. For eleven years he was with Mr. Hugh Milman, at Southport, and for two years with Mrs. Hirst, of Riversleigh. The other "boy" is Harry Tokon, from Ambrym. He arrived in 1882, and for ten years was in the service of Captain Townley and Mrs. Hirst. On 3rd August of last year, Mrs. Hirst wrote to me as follows:—"The Immigration Department inform me that if I keep a kanaka any longer, a fine, of perhaps £50, may be imposed, and

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that the "boys" must not sleep here nor be given any food." I promptly sent that letter down to Lord Northcote. I got a letter from Harry Tokon, which I should like to leave in your possession. He was then living out in the bush. I know both of these "boys" personally. They are earnest-minded Christians, who are interested in their work, quiet, and sober, and they regard with dread the idea of going back to a non-Christian island. This is the letter:—

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DEAR SIR,—Just write to you also to let you know that I been try everywhere in bush to get work, so I been very sick, so I go back to town, so they won't let me go back to Mrs. Hirst, so I won't go back the Island, I don't like go back. Dear sir, will you please kindly try to do some things for me.

HARRY TOKON.

13134. Where is that boy now? He cannot get work, and he is walking about. He may be dead for all I know. I do not know what has become of him. I heard the other "boy" had been out trying to get work somewhere on the sugar plantations in New South Wales, but on that I am by no means clear. I have not had any communication upon the subject since that date.

13135. *By Mr. Paget:* Neither of these islanders was entitled to an exemption ticket? No; but they are cases of real hardship.

13136. *By the Chairman:* Have you asked any of the "boys" how they will be likely to fare as regards the food supply when they get back to their islands? Yes. They do not seem to anticipate very much difficulty. That, again, is a childish way of looking at the question. I have asked them particularly with regard to Fiu. One "boy" stated about three weeks ago that there is plenty of food there; that things grow very quickly; and that there is no fear of famine. I have not heard any of the kanakas express fears with regard to the food supply, but I do not think they are competent witnesses on the subject. If the Malayta people are making no provision for the future, they are not the type of people to understand whether there is likely to be a shortage of food or not.

13137. Have you any communication upon the subject from your agents at Fiu? Yes.

13138. *By Mr. Nielson:* You said that you have noticed signs of deterioration in the kanakas, and you put it down to their being out of work, and the absence of teachers? To the absence of schools. When the kanakas were on the plantations, there was almost invariably a school provided for them, which was subsidised in many cases by the Government of Queensland. Those schools were the centre of the whole interest of the kanakas on the plantations, and, when they went all over the place, they got away from the good influence of the school. They are only children.

13139. One clergyman who gave evidence said that a lot of the Christian "boys" were going astray through evil outside influences? I think that is quite true. The people we are trying to keep them away from most are the Chinese. One of my great endeavours has been to institute places where they can go when they go into Mackay, for instance, so that they shall not be obliged to sleep in the Chinese quarters. We make it a rule that the Christian "boys" are not to have anything to do with the heathen Chinese, because they generally get the "boys" into the habit of drinking, opium smoking, or playing fan-tan. I am not saying that this is true of all the Chinese, but am speaking merely of the low type of Chinese.

13140. *By the Chairman:* You have heard of these places in Chinatown in Mackay and Cairns? Yes; I know them. I think they are a great source of evil to others besides kanakas.

13141. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you discovered that the kanakas regard the question of deportation in a spirit of resignation and that they are perfectly indifferent about it? I think that, if the Government were sending them out to certain death, they would go without a word of complaint.

13142. *By the Chairman:* That would not necessarily mean that they did not realise the danger? I do not think that they foresee danger. The fact is that "big fellow Government" is a power second only to the Almighty in the mind of the kanaka.

13143. *By Mr. Nielson:* But some of the "boys" are absolutely afraid to go home, because they are practically fugitive offenders from their own country; they have cleared out because they have broken some of their tribal laws, and are afraid of punishment—What would you suggest in their case? If they are Christians I should be inclined to deport them to some mission station if they are willing to go, or to some "school village," as they are called. It is not necessary that all in the "school villages" should be Christians. Those who are not Christians, and who wish to live there, are protected from the incursions of the bushmen. I am speaking now of the island of Malayta. I know nothing personally about the islands, but I am vice-president of the Melanesian Mission, and for many years I have been in close communication with the islands. The Comity of Missions agreement made by Bishop Selwyn in 1853, divided the South Seas into certain groups, which were the spheres of the various missions, and until the last two years this arrangement has been faithfully adhered to, and has been a source of great strength to the islands. The islands under the sphere of the Anglican Melanesian Mission are the Solomon Islands, Banks Islands, Santa Cruz, and neighbouring islands. Speaking generally of the Anglican sphere, the peoplen of the islands desire the kanakas to be repatriated. The bishop writes to me and says the Melanesian Mission would be unpopular if it hindered the repatriation of the Queensland "boys." Speaking generally, the Bishop of Melanesia thinks that the danger to the "boys" returning has been somewhat overestimated. He wrote to me on 30th March, 1906, as follows:—"In almost every island in our diocese they will be in no danger whatever. In Pentecost, Muewo, and Aoba (New Hebrides) one could not anticipate anything happening to them on landing, as these three islands are strongly under the mission's influence. The eight islands in the Banks group are entirely Christian, and consequently safe. The Torres Islanders are very quiet. But few Santa Cruzians are away in Queensland; and these, on their return, will receive nothing but a welcome. They will be in no danger whatever. As regards the Solomons, the following districts are perfectly safe:—Gala, Ulawa, Buguto (Yaabel), Ugi, the north-east side of San Christoval, the south-east end of Malayta, Savo, and the whole of Guadalcanar, if the boys are returned to their own proper places."

13144. *By Mr. Paget:* That is what the Government agent is on board the schooner for, and I may say that it has been strictly carried out in the past? Yes. "In fact, the only places in which they may be in some danger will be in non-school villages in Malayta, the south-west side of San Christoval, and such places in Guadalcanar as the 'returns' are strangers to. I have already stated in my letter to the

papers that in Malayta danger will be almost eliminated, I believe, if the 'returns' are taken to one of the twenty villages where there are schools, or to Fiu, where the people will welcome those who are Christians."

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13144A. Is that letter from Bishop Wilson? Yes. Now, the proposal which I have submitted to the Premier with regard to an agricultural college at Fiu, was framed with the object of providing for the humane deportation of those Christian kanakas who, for one reason or another, cannot be safely sent to their native islands. It is not proposed that any should go to the colony who are not Christian or who are unwilling to throw in their lot with the Anglican Mission. Fiu is on the west coast of Malayta. There is a Christian school in the place with a white clergyman, the Rev. A. J. Hopkins, in charge. There are also a considerable number of Christians, many of whom are returned labourers from Fiji. The people are prepared to welcome the Queensland labourers, but a large influx of people will necessitate some considerable preparation in an island where those people not under Christian influence are notably improvident. That was brought before you by witnesses in Bundaberg. It is proposed that a small party shall proceed at once from Mackay to plant yams and corn, and that the main body of colonists shall follow later. May is the best month of the year for the advance party to arrive at Fiu, and the cyclone season must specially be avoided. I suggested to the Queensland Government the advisability of assisting in the formation of the colony, but subsequently withdrawing my request for reasons which I suppose you will not ask me to mention. The Melanesian Mission will be content if the colonists are landed at Fiu free of charge. The question of danger was raised by Miss Young in Bundaberg.

13145. *By Mr. Nielson:* And by Mr. Ussher? Yes; but danger is practically non-existent in school villages. The Bishop of Melanesia would not make that statement unless he was thoroughly convinced on the subject. A recent cablegram from Norfolk Island informed me that Fiu is now open to colonisation, and the people are waiting for the Queensland "returns." That is for the advance party.

13145A. *By Mr. Paget:* They have left Mackay? No; because the Government have hung us up until you send in your report.

13146. I understood Mr. Sage was leaving Mackay with some islanders a fortnight after we were there? He writes to me saying that the people are getting despondent.

13147. *By Mr. Nielson:* Getting impatient? Yes; and changing their attitude again. They are only children.

13148. With regard to the settlers in Fiu, are they so few in number that they are unable to make preparations? They are now making preparations, but they need other hands to make still further preparations, and they need seed yams and seed corn, and so forth.

13149. *By the Chairman:* How long after they planted will it be before they have a food supply? The Bishop thinks six or eight months will be sufficient.

13150. Do the Melanesian Mission propose that the "boys" be landed there free of expense? Yes.

13151. They do not ask for further support? No. They do not ask the Government to take any responsibility whatever in the matter. The Sydney and Melbourne papers in commenting on my scheme seemed to think that it would make the Government responsible. All it makes the Government responsible for is to treat the kanakas as reasonable beings to this extent—that they will be allowed to say to which island they wish to go.

13152. You are willing to receive any islanders? They are to be Christians.

13153. You make that proviso? Yes; we make that proviso at Fiu, and we wish them to be ready to throw in their lot with the Anglican Church.

13154. They are two very important provisos? Yes; and we are trying to work out what is a practical scheme. I am very shy about being dragged into any unseemly dispute between conflicting Christian missions on a question on which I am anxious to help the kanakas all I can.

13155. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you made any inquiries as to how many islanders you anticipate will go to Fiu? They were quite prepared to send an advance party of twenty-five men in the beginning of March last, accompanied by Mr. Sage, and the majority of the members of the Selwyn Mission, which numbers 300, would have followed after.

13156. *By Mr. Paget:* In what way is it proposed to make the settlement at Fiu self-supporting—I speak in the interests of the islanders who do not belong to that place, and who may desire to go there? The Melanesian idea of self-support is simply a question of food, and we have taken it for granted that, if we can provide them with sufficient food when they arrive, they will not be in any danger of famine, as they will cultivate sufficient ground to provide themselves with sufficient food in the future.

13157. It is not what you might term an industrial settlement? No; it is nothing more than a native settlement acting under Christian influence. It is no more an industrial settlement than any other mission school on the islands.

13158. *By the Chairman:* But it is to be confined to Christians? Yes. You must remember that it is only with regard to Christians that any danger is likely to arise, because they have been a long time in Queensland, and because they very frequently marry girls from other settlements and other islands.

13159. *By Mr. Paget:* We have ample evidence as to that? There is no danger in deporting kanakas who came under the three-year system, provided they are landed at their own places, but the danger arises in connection with those who have remained for a lengthy period in Queensland.

13160. *By the Chairman:* They lose touch with their islands? Yes. The question of the site of Fiu has also been raised. In answer to one of your questions at Bundaberg, a witness informed the Commission that Fiu is a swamp and a sort of place that he would not like to live in. I only wish to say that this was the case until recently, but now the settlement is removed to a healthier site. The soil in the neighbourhood of Fiu is good, and food easily grown. My information from the island upon this subject has been confirmed by Christian kanakas in Queensland. One at Ingham, who was not willing himself to go to Fiu, has said that "food grow there plenty quick," and there is little danger of famine.

13161. *By Mr. Paget:* Then the witness who said it was a swamp when he saw it was correct? He was partly correct, but it has been moved to a healthier site and the school church is being rebuilt.

13162. *By the Chairman:* The information was correct so far as it went? Yes. The scheme appeals most in the neighbourhood of Mackay, but probably "boys" from other parts of Queensland would join the colony. The colony is not intended to be more than a practical method of dealing with a limited number of "returns," and may be adopted for other colonies in other islands.

Right Rev. 13163. *By Mr. Nielson:* You suggested that, as soon as the islanders found out that there was to be no forcible deportation, a number of them veered round? Yes; and said that they they did not want to go.

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13165. *By Mr. Paget:* Why do they not anticipate it now? Because they have been assured by their friends and by me, upon the strength of what has appeared over and over again in the Southern papers, and from the assurances I have received from various Ministers of the State, that they shall not be deported if they would be in any danger by reason of their deportation. I do not think anyone here has ever told them that they will not have to go, but they have been told they will not have to go if it means danger or inhumanity to them.

13166. *By the Chairman:* Have they been told that they will not have to go to the place where the danger exists? Yes. But has it not also been stated that no married people will necessarily be deported if any hardship would be entailed thereby?

13167. I have never heard it authoritatively stated? It has been continually stated.

13168. *By Mr. Nielson:* I daresay it is our duty to make a recommendation on that particular point? It will most likely change their opinion again if it is not the case.

13169. I presume you are aware that hitherto "boys" who have been returning to the islands have been allowed to choose a landing place other than their own "passages," if there was any danger in landing them at their own "passages"? Yes; but we must look at the question as being one in which we should not throw all the responsibility upon the kanakas.

13170. *By the Chairman:* In case any "boy" should wish, when he reaches the islands, to land at Fiu because he considers it unsafe to land at his own "passage," who is to decide whether or not he is a Christian? I think you could trust his own word for that. They take Christianity very seriously. If he was a missionary "boy" he would ask to go to the mission that he was interested in. I do not believe any Anglican "boy" would ask to go to any other settlement than one in the Anglican sphere of influence.

13171. *By Mr. Nielson:* We have met "boys" who say they own land in the islands—One said he owned some at Fiu—So far as you know, has there been any disturbance of the titles to land belonging to "boys" in Queensland? I have never heard of any, and I do not believe it is at all likely.

13172. If there had been any such interference with titles, there might be trouble when the "boys" returned to the islands? I do not think there is the slightest fear of that, so far as the missionaries are concerned.

13173. *By Mr. Paget:* What is the area of land at Fiu that is controlled or owned by the mission? I am not prepared to answer that question straight off, although I could get information upon it; but I am inclined to think that the title to land at Fiu, or on any of the islands, must be regarded as a title to land would be in India, Burmah, or Ceylon, where the natives all have titles and are very careful about the transfer of those titles. I think a man in the South Seas would have a squatter's right from the tribe settled in the district.

13174. Has your mission a squatter's right? Not from any Government; but it is a type of squatter's right.

13175. Your mission has not free-selected some thousands of acres of land at Fiu to the exclusion of other people? Oh, no! We have been very careful in the South Seas in avoiding what has been a great scandal in mission work—that is the system of overlapping. The system of the comity of missions worked very well until within the last two years, when this energetic mission in Queensland has practically been making settlements in the islands. It has always been observed by the Presbyterians and the Methodists. We have always been most scrupulous in observing one another's sphere of influence.

13176. *By the Chairman:* You are going to cultivate a large quantity of land as the owner? There is no one there. Malaya has become largely depopulated of late years. It is an imprudent place in non-Christian parts; and I think they go and settle there very much like the first white people who came to Queensland. They find the land in front of them, and they occupy it. You will notice that I said distinctly "The people want Christians"—that is, the people of Fiu. I do not say Mr. Hopkins or the Melanesian mission want Christians, but the people want them.

13177. Then Mr. Hopkins stays there at the invitation of the people already there? Yes; he is a sort of Richelieu behind the throne.

13178. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you discovered why so many "boys" have not returned to their homes, if they are out of work and have no chance of getting work? So far as I have gathered from them, the chief reason for their not returning is because no boat was available. The reason why they have been unable to obtain work has generally been laid down—I am speaking merely as the spokesman of the "boys"—as due to the fact that a certain regulation has been passed making the last employer responsible for the balance of the passage-money home. That has made men afraid to engage "boys," lest they should incur an unknown liability. There is another point that I feel it is within my province to speak about—the question of child labour. For some reason or another, up to the present time there has undoubtedly been in certain districts a shortage of white labour, and men have had to employ their own children in order to obtain the advantages of working under the white labour conditions. Some of the most successful farmers on a small scale have been those who have worked with their family labour. Of course, a man has every right to use his children, and it is very proper that he should have a free hand in the matter; but there are cases where considerable care will have to be exercised by the Government for the protection of the children. I am not prepared to give individual cases that I know of, but I merely state the fact that there are cases where children who should be at school have been made to work upon sugar farms at manual labour. The work has interfered with their education, and also with their growth. I have in my mind one field where I saw two girls of thirteen and fourteen and a boy of twelve working the whole day in a temperature of something like 100 degrees in the shade.

13179. What were they doing? As far as I remember, they were hoeing. I do not say it was work that they were incapable of doing, but I was informed that they were irregular in their attendance at school. I am most anxious not to make any alarmist statements upon the subject, or to say that an ordinary farmer is not uncommonly careful about his children—we know the contrary is the case—but there are cases like the one I speak of, where a man will say, "The bread and butter of my children for

the next year depend upon whether this work is done or is left undone"; and this state of affairs may cause a very serious injury to the stamina of the future mothers and children of Queensland.

13180. *By the Chairman*: Do you not know that it is the custom for farmers' children to do work that they are able to do—it is nothing new? It is not the fact that they have to work on the farms that I take exception to, but to their being compelled to work in a temperature of 100 degrees in the shade.

13181. You would not advocate bringing children up with the idea that they should never do anything but go to school? I do not think that at all; but I know that in England there is certain legislation in force for the compulsory education of children.

13182. *By Mr. Paget*: We have compulsory clauses in our Education Act too? They are compulsory clauses which are not administered.

13183. *By the Chairman*: Oh, yes; wherever we have been we have been informed that the police have very seldom to institute proceedings against parents for not sending their children regularly to school? I am only speaking of what has come under my own observation, and I conceive that there is a real danger to the children. I felt—as most men have felt—a great abhorrence of the child labour which occurred in England before the Factories Acts were passed.

13184. We have legislation to protect the children? I am quite well aware of that; but I am pointing out something to which I think special attention should be given.

13185. Extra caution should be used? Yes. I am not by any means casting aspersions upon the humanity of parents. I am only saying that there are certain cases which have come to my knowledge where greater care should be taken. If there is a shortage of white labour it will tend, in my judgment, to make it much more difficult for the small farmers to avoid unduly working their children. There are just a few things that strike me upon the general bearing of the case. I would like to emphasise very strongly the necessity for taking time in the matter of deportation. Of course, we all understand that the kanakas must go, and they are willing to go. The only danger is one of haste, and even if a few remain, we may say, for the term of their natural lives, their number would be infinitesimal. The principle that has been behind the legislation on the question would be maintained, and in my judgment almost all the kanakas would probably go of their own free will. The point that I want to emphasise is that I think the whole danger is from undue haste.

13186. You know that there are three months in the year when it is unsafe to send vessels down to the Islands? I do. The second point I wish to mention is that steps should be taken to remove the disabilities upon the labourers obtaining work until the time of their deportation, and I mention this, not from an industrial, but simply from a humanitarian point of view. As I said before, I think the regulation with reference to the last employer paying the balance of the passage money has been an active cause of considerable hardship among Melanesians in Queensland. The third thing is the question of temporary reserves. I think the suggestion of a temporary reserve for kanakas is not only full of practical difficulties, but is likely to be a hardship to the kanaka labourers, who would be expected to clear the ground for the benefit of others without any permanent benefit to themselves.

13187. What if they were paid? It is a different matter altogether if they are to be paid, but I was thinking more particularly of other things. However, if they are to be paid it is a different matter altogether.

13188. It was suggested to us by one of the "boys" at Proserpine that the kanakas should be allowed to settle down on some estate? Did you ever hear of government by suggestion, Mr. Ranking?

13189. That is evidence we had? I have had great experience with reserves, and the question of the hardship of working the reserve would be a question of the shortage of rations; but if the Government is prepared to bear that expense, well and good. It would be a hardship upon the kanaka to be removed from Bundaberg to Proserpine compulsorily and left to starve.

13190. *By Mr. Paget*: I do not know anybody who anticipates any such thing as that; it would be extremely unbusiness-like, at any rate? The difficulty of the reserve is that you have to regard it as a refuge or else as a prison; and if you are going to have it as a prison, like Fraser Island was for the blacks, it will need to be policed.

13191. *By Mr. Nielson*: That is so? I found from experience at Yarabah that it will need a considerable strengthening in the administration to be able to control them. That is the chief reason I have for being against the use of a reserve. The plan that suggests itself to me, I must confess, is one of local option. That is for the period intervening between the present time and the time when they are deported. I think that North Queensland, taken as a whole, would probably not raise any serious objection to retaining the kanakas for a number of years.

13192. *By Mr. Paget*: The kanakas are not to have local option, but the white people? The people I have spoken to on the question of retaining the kanakas think there should be local option so far as the district is concerned. So far as my experience north of Townsville has gone, I do not think any serious objection would be raised to their being retained, it being understood that it was only for a time, and that, as soon as the opportunity comes when they can be safely deported, they will be deported. That is a suggestion that appeals to me. It seems to me that it is only incurring unnecessary expense and raising unnecessary difficulties, to have a reserve made, because I know the practical difficulty of working reserves.

13193. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think the number of vessels engaged at the present time in the trade should be added to? You have asked me a question which I do not think a bishop is capable of answering.

13194. Do you think the kanakas should be sent home in larger numbers than at present? Yes, if they could be sent home quickly. I think a much larger number of kanakas would have gone long before this if there had been vessels at Lucinda Point to take them. They have asked for the "Southern Cross," our Melanesian boat, to be sent for them. A letter was written from Geraldton to the Bishop of Melanesia making that request, but it was impossible to grant it.

13195. *By the Chairman*: That shows a desire on their part to start from there if they can get away? The only difficulty to my mind is the question of great haste. The question of haste, so far as the industrial side is concerned, I am not prepared to speak about. I speak from the point of view of the kanaka. I wish to emphasise one point, which I feel sure is one which the Commission will agree with, and that is, it is a deplorable thing if the kanaka suffers the very slightest harm by reason of deportation. We have a high reputation to maintain for humanity, and the kanaka has been a faithful

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servant to the State, and it would be a deplorable thing if we took advantage of his weakness and susceptibility to influence and suggestion and did anything that would cause him danger or privation when he lands at his island.

The Chairman: We all recognise that the honour of the State is involved.

Mr. Paget: That is so.

The Chairman: And that justice should be done in this matter.

13197. *By Mr. Nielson:* How does the progress of mission work on the islands compare with the progress of mission work among the islanders in Queensland? It is very much easier and quicker in the islands. The islanders do not want the people to come to Queensland.

13198. There are no evil influences there? You only need to read Louis Becke's novels to know that there are evil influences at work everywhere. They are more amenable to Christian teaching in the islands than here. The people of the islands at one time looked with the utmost dread on the return of the Queensland labourers. They generally arrived with a cheap gun, a bottle of whisky, and a great disinclination to do any work. But that is now altogether a thing of the past. I had a letter some two or three years ago, which I forwarded to the Government, which stated that the men who were returning from the Queensland stations were a source of real strength to the mission. This fact I largely put down to the very widespread system adopted by the Queensland Government of subsidising school work, not as missionary work, but as school work done by somebody or other who has got to do it, and by those who run the schools on the plantations.

13199. *By Mr. Paget:* That is so—I have had experience of that myself? Exactly.

13200. *By Mr. Nielson:* I do not know that you need credit the Government of Queensland particularly for that subsidy, because it was taken out of the Polynesian fund, in which there is now a shortage owing to that subsidy, which shortage will have to be made up to pay for the passages of the "boys"? It might have been used for some other purpose.

13201. *By Mr. Paget:* It came out of our money, as a matter of fact? Exactly.

13202. *By Mr. Nielson:* With regard to the restrictions against the "boys" taking firearms, I think the inspection has been very good? That is a thing that is to the credit of the Queensland Government. It is very little understood, not only in the South, but also in England and elsewhere, but in my judgment the Queensland Government has adopted a humanitarian course in regard to the kanakas.

13203. *By Mr. Paget:* Yes; and the Queensland Government has done so for many years past? Yes; for many years past. For the last ten years I have had to deal with the question of coloured races in Queensland, and I cannot speak too highly of the general character of the Queensland Government in the matter.

THOMAS SMYTH, Landowner, Johnstone River, examined:

T. Smyth.
25 May, 1906.

13204. *By the Chairman:* What are you? I am a landowner on the Johnstone River.

13205. *By Mr. Paget:* You appear here as a representative of the Chamber of Commerce? Yes.

13206. *By the Chairman:* Will you give your evidence straight ahead? I have had some experience of Polynesians, as I had some of them employed on my lands, clearing them for the central mills, at a place called Darralgee, on the Johnstone River. My son occupies the place now, and has some cattle there. I go backwards and forwards there, and keep in touch with the question now before the Commission. I know at present that there is a good deal of unrest and disquiet in connection with the growers of cane on the Johnstone River with regard to the labour question. Some of them have their doubts, even this year before the kanakas are deported, whether they will be able to get sufficient white labour to satisfactorily harvest their crops. Under that impression, some of them are endeavouring to sell out, some are selling out very well, and some are buying in expecting things to improve. But there is a nervous apprehension all through on this subject. The argument advanced by some gentlemen is:—If this year, when there are 6,000 Polynesians to do work, people are endeavouring to supplement that labour by going to Melbourne and all over the place looking for labourers, how will they fare next year, when these 6,000 men are deported? That is a question that is discussed daily, and they are not able to come to any decision. I am not directly interested in the matter; but, from reading the evidence that has been adduced from time to time, I have thought it is a misfortune that the odour of politics got in and coloured a good deal of the testimony. People on one side are of the opinion—and if they are not of the opinion, they think they have a right to say it—that a white man can do twice as much as a coloured man; that there are plenty white men in the country to do the work, and that they are able and willing to do it. I believe the odour of politics induces men to speak in that way, as they think it is part of the policy; but it is likely to lead themselves and others astray. I have studied the question, and have been brought into close proximity with it in connection with the building of a mill at Darralgee. Discerning people will have very little difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the places of these 6,000 Polynesians cannot be easily filled up by white men. We have not 6,000 unemployed white men in the State that I am aware of. At all events the Press reports do not show it. We have not 2,000 agricultural labourers out of employment in Queensland; so that it is very difficult for the growers of cane to believe that the vacuum can be filled up with a class of men that we have not got. If we get them by paying high wages, we must starve the farmers on the Darling Downs and other places where they require men to harvest their wheat, and their harvesting and ours generally come on about the same time. There is a good deal of testimony also being adduced about the number of men who are willing to cut cane at £1, 25s., and 30s. a week. To my own knowledge, men have gone up to the sugar districts who were fairly starved into the position. There are masons, carpenters, ex-civil servants—men who previously had lifted nothing heavier than a pencil or a pen, and who, being out of employment for a long time, have been compelled to engage in this work; but I am satisfied that a crisis is coming. My own experience on the Johnstone is that it is not congenial labour for white men. There is a very heavy rainfall, and there is a proportionate amount of dew. Even when it is not raining, the men are wet up to their knees by heavy dews when going to their work, and they have to work in wet clothes until they are dried by the hot sun. Then dew falls again about 4 or 5 in the afternoon and they go home wet, and it is hard to convince men who have been accustomed to earn £3 10s. a week in a mine, or 8s. or 9s. a day in municipalities and other places, that it is congenial work in a cane field at £1 a week and with rough fare under the conditions I speak of. Some men who are now working on the Herbert River have

written to me asking if I can find them other employment. One of them is a bricklayer and another is a carpenter. There is no question that last year and this year have been ideal years for forcing a number of white men into the sugar industry. During my forty-one years' experience of Queensland I have never seen more hardship and misery outside the sugar districts than this last year; and yet they cannot get enough white men at a time when stagnation is rife; when there are no buildings and public works going on; when local authorities are unable to give employment owing to the stoppage of their endowment, and when there is a demand made for the last penny of interest and redemption.

T. Smyth.
25 May, 1906.

13207. *By Mr. Paget*: I think it would be advisable not to include those remarks in your evidence?

13208. *By the Chairman*: A large number of kanakas will have to be deported, and the question is how their labour is to be replaced—You think that white men cannot do the work and that there are not a sufficient number available? More especially at a time like this.

13209. Are you in favour of immigration to make up the deficiency? I think the industry cannot be carried on without the importation of sufficient labour under such conditions as to make it reliable.

13210. I suppose you would suggest that it should be obtained from the Continent of Europe? Yes.

13211. From what country? That might be gauged by the satisfaction that different nationalities give in agricultural work—such as Germans, Irish, Scotch, and English; but I would like that they should be imported on such lines as would make them reliable as well as numerically sufficient.

13212. You think they should be agricultural labourers? Certainly.

13213. Have you any suggestions to make as to how the kanakas may be deported with humanity? I have very little doubt that there will be a great deal of humanity exercised in connection with the work of deportation; but I certainly think that they should not all be deported at one time.

13214. You think there should be no undue haste? I think there is undue haste. They are not a prolific people, and in a few years, with no more being imported, they would all have died out.

13215. That is a matter with which we have nothing to do—However, you advocate caution in not deporting them too hurriedly? Yes.

GEORGE HENRY PRITCHARD, Representative of the Townsville Chamber of Commerce, examined:

13216. *By the Chairman*: In what capacity do you appear to-day? I am here as a representative of the Chamber of Commerce. The aspect of the matter that I wish to bring strongly before you is that the sugar industry is of vast importance to North Queensland, and the Chamber of Commerce regard it with the greatest possible interest. A little while ago we thought so seriously of the matter that a very extensive conference of sugar-growers was held here. At that conference there were accredited representatives from every sugar centre in North Queensland, and the various aspects of the matter were thrashed out altogether apart from any political views either one way or the other. It was a thoroughly cosmopolitan gathering, and I think the views which were expressed and the statistics which were forthcoming were of very considerable value. So much so that I thought, in case it had not come before you, I would tender a copy of the proceedings containing the various speeches and the resolutions that were passed, together with the statistics which were submitted by practical farmers, who have embarked their own capital in the industry, and who gave the conference the benefit of their experience. [*Copy of "Report of the North Queensland Sugar Conference," 29th October, 1904—tendered.*] I would like to strongly emphasise the fact that the sugar industry is of paramount importance to North Queensland. It is the greatest agricultural industry we have, and it behoves us to devise some means whereby those who are interested shall not suffer any loss when the deportation of the kanakas takes place. I thoroughly endorse what his lordship has said with regard to undue haste. That is a very big factor in dealing with the question. If you can make any recommendation, or if those to whom you have to report make any recommendation, whereby the risk of loss may be reduced, I am sure the cane farmers of North Queensland will receive it with a very considerable amount of satisfaction.

G. H. Pritchard.
25 May, 1906.

13217. *By Mr. Paget*: Will the islanders? That I do not know. I should say a lot of them will not, and a lot of them will. They vary very much.

13218. *By Mr. Nielson*: You know the kanakas cannot be employed after 1st January? That is a statutory difficulty which Parliament can easily get over if they think fit. It appeals to us as business men as being excessively hard on men who have embarked the whole of their capital and perhaps spent the whole of their lives in the industry, as many of them have done.

13219. *By the Chairman*: As a business man, do you not think, with this looming in the future, that provision should have been made two or three years ago for this crisis? Undoubtedly; and when I made an address before the conference in 1904, I drew special attention to it. On page 2 of the report you will see that I said—

I should like to say, by way of explaining what gave birth to the idea of holding this conference, that it appeared to the members of the chamber that the great amount of doubt, uncertainty, and unrest as to the future which was operating in the minds of those connected with the industry indicated clearly that the time was ripe for such a gathering as this, and they, therefore, took steps to organise it on thoroughly cosmopolitan lines, so that every shade of opinion should be represented, and the experience of growers who have worked with black, coloured, and white labour should be given and weighed, and practical deductions made therefrom.

13220. That was in October, 1904? Yes. I also said on that occasion—

If any endorsement was required of the fact that we have taken action at what may be aptly termed the precise psychological moment, we have it in the knowledge that the Treasurer of the Commonwealth Government has specially dealt with the duty, the excise, and the bounty on sugar in his recent Budget Speech, and admitted that the continuance of the bounty and excise, which simultaneously expire on January 1, 1907, would have to be taken into grave consideration by Parliament, and, speaking for himself, he said that he sympathised with the position more especially as regards Queensland, and was prepared to do whatever he could to assist the sugar industry and help growers to work in such a way as to enable them to escape loss through the abolition of black labour.

G. H.
Fritchard,

25 May, 1906.

13221. That is the financial aspect—I was thinking of the labour aspect? Messrs. Draper and Chataway both dealt very fully with the labour aspect in their speeches, if you will read them. You will gather invaluable information from them.

13222. *By Mr. Nielson*: The unfortunate part of the whole thing is this—This conference was, no doubt, an excellent thing at the time—the dangers and difficulties ahead were pointed out, but those engaged in the industry took no steps to meet them, and they allowed everything to be postponed so as to come all in a heap in January next? I only say, in reply to that, that delegates from this conference were appointed to take down these resolutions to the Premier of the State, and they elaborated on them pretty considerably. The Premier showed a distinctly sympathetic feeling to the important position presented, and the growers were disposed to leave the engineering of it in the hands of the Government, because they felt they could not approach the federal authorities in anything like so emphatic a way as the State Government, and they looked to the State Government to focus the thing and carry it through. The chamber wrote on several occasions reminding the State Premier of these resolutions having been placed in his hands, and asking him if he had any information, and how it was getting on. I can assure you that not for one moment did they rest on their oars. You will see one resolution was passed to the effect that the Townsville Chamber of Commerce should be the medium through which this thing should be pushed forward. This is the resolution—

Mr. Boyd then moved, and Mr. Andrews seconded—"That the Townsville Chamber of Commerce be authorised to conduct all correspondence and negotiations with the Federal authorities in giving effect to the resolutions passed at this conference."

13223. *By Mr. Paget*: It went through the State Government? Yes; as we thought that the proper channel through which to approach the Federal authorities.

13224. *By Mr. Nielson*: They did not do anything to meet the new conditions which will obtain on the 1st of January; they are keeping on with the black labour until the 31st December, 1906, and they complain that they will have the trouble all in a heap when they could have prepared for it? You refer to the canegrowers on the rivers.

13225. We know of a number who are cutting and growing with black labour—They probably thought they would keep them as long as they could; but they must not complain later if they get all the trouble in a heap, because they had an opportunity of preparing for it? A lot of the people who attended this conference employed white labour, and they gave the result of their experience. I do not think you can lay it down as a general statement that the Northern farmers did not take steps. I have a gentleman here from the Mossman Mill who will reply to some of the evidence which was given at Ayr.

13226. We have been to districts where 80 per cent. of the sugar-cane is still being grown by black labour, and they want to use that as an argument to prove that white men cannot do the work? I assure you they cannot, in very many cases, at all events. Although we are not farmers ourselves, we know a good deal about the labour conditions. I say emphatically that in many cases the men have genuinely endeavoured to get white labour, but in many cases they have been disappointed. In other instances they have succeeded. I remember well that Mr. Hood from Bundaberg had a very successful gang.

13227. *By the Chairman*: From our inquiries we learn that last year and this year were the first occasions on which attempts were made to get men from the southern colonies, and they have been eminently successful? Yes.

13228. *By Mr. Paget*: But a large number of islanders are under agreement? That is one thing; and it is a contract, although the man is only a kanaka.

13229. *By Mr. Nielson*: I think the position is simply, as one witness put it, that they were not going to throw dirty water away until they got clean—Although he knew that on the 31st December he would be compelled to throw away this dirty water—using the words in the same sense—he never made any attempt to provide clean water, and now he grumbles because he is considerably perturbed about the question? Then would arise this question—Where would the line of demarcation be drawn? We pointed out here in 1904 that the doubt and unrest then existing had to be dealt with in some form. That is not two years ago. This conference was the first organised effort to focus the difficulty, and it was called with the idea of facing the difficulty and suggesting some remedy for it.

13230. *By Mr. Paget*: There were 70,000 tons of sugar made under white labour conditions in the State last year? This industry means to the State £1,500,000 per annum if it means anything.

13231. *By Mr. Nielson*: It was £2,000,000 last year? I put it down at the raw sugar value. It is as good to us in Queensland as the wool industry in New South Wales, the dairying industry in Victoria, and the wheat industry in South Australia. That is why we take it so seriously in North Queensland. I do not want you to run away with the idea that a lot of people who should have taken action did not take action. They thought it would be to their interest to go on with the contract "boys" and let the position evolve itself. A position very often alters, and human minds have very different views of a single subject. My desire is to impress you with the fact that, if North Queenslanders or any proportion of them, were perhaps rather slow in moving, it was because they hoped that this conference, at which resolutions were passed and presented through the State Government to the Federal authorities, would lead to something definite being done.

13232. *By the Chairman*: In the direction of continuing coloured labour? Possibly; or continuing it on a sliding scale. With regard to the suggestion made by the Bishop as to local option, it is a very good suggestion to my mind, and I fully agree with it. I do not think I have seen that suggestion made before.

13233. *By Mr. Paget*: North of Townsville? I do not care where it is. It seems to be a good suggestion. Make it north of Townsville if you like.

13234. Do not say "if you like" to me? It was Bishop Frodsham's suggestion.

13235. *By the Chairman*: Local option in all the sugar centres in the State? I do not think it is required in one more than another.

13236. *By Mr. Nielson*: Would you not let Mackay have a chance? If the authorities adopted such a scheme in any part of the division, I say that the sugar-growers of North Queensland would receive it with satisfaction. It is a good suggestion, to my mind.

13237. You favour local option in regard to the retention of the kanakas? Yes; but you are going to put them under State control. It would be better to leave them where they now are, and not put them on

any estate. That would work much more smoothly and with less expense. It is an idea that presents itself favourably to me on every conceivable ground. It is really a good idea. I strongly commend to you the wisdom of reading the speeches at that conference, because they were not men who were picked to suit our purpose. Those on both sides of the question, and employing both black and white labour, gave their experience.

G. H.
Pritchard.

25 May, 1906.

13238. *By the Chairman*: You can see that the question of local option would involve a referendum, and it does not appear to me to be workable? If the Federal Government take a firm stand and decide on such a course, it will be all right. They will have to take charge of it somehow after the 31st of December this year. The "boys" will be wandering about idle, and who will look after them?

13239. *By Mr. Nielson*: Something will have to be done? Yes. I think a strong Government could deal with it very simply.

13240. *By the Chairman*: Local option seems to me to infer that there must be a referendum? Yes.

ARTHUR PIEGROME, Carpenter, examined:

13241. *By the Chairman*: On what subject do you wish to be heard? In refutation of one statement A. Piegrome made yesterday. I take it that this Commission wishes to have evidence of an unbiased nature. Owing to the bad state of the building trade last year I was induced to take a gang of men from Townsville to the Mossman Central Mill. A statement was made here yesterday which was not altogether true, and I would like to give the result of my experience.

A. Piegrome.
25 May, 1906.

13242. What was your experience? The statement made yesterday was that when twenty men were engaged by the Mossman Central Mill Company from Townsville a similar number of men or more were idle on the Mossman. I was the initiator of the movement by interviewing Mr. Young, of the Labour Bureau. Negotiations were opened up with the Mossman Central Mill Company, and this gang was formed. When we got to the Mossman we found that a number of men were unemployed. They made it their business the first night of our advent there to interview us, and I could see from the start the cause of their not being employed. They were under the influence of drink when they came to us, and there is no doubt in my mind that they would have been employed by the mill company if they had been a sober class of men. From time to time during the sittings of your Commission, I have read statements made defamatory of the management of the company—

13243. *By Mr. Nielson*: All the witnesses spoke in the highest terms of the company? I have seen defamatory statements made from time to time.

13244. *By the Chairman*: They were not made to the Commission, so that they do not concern us—everything we heard was favourable to the company? I can safely say that the management treated the men very well.

13245. Is there anything else you wish to say? I take it that sober men who are determined to do a fair day's work will find their services in request, and will get fair treatment from the Mossman Central Mill Company. The only thing that I have to say in connection with the employment of white men in the sugar industry is that the housing accommodation is hardly sufficient, and that has had, to a certain extent, a detrimental effect by causing men to leave their employment on account of discomfort.

13246. *By Mr. Nielson*: You are aware that legislation was passed last session to remedy that? There is one defect in the Act, and that is that it only applies to places in which at least nine men are employed.

13247. What was your occupation on the Mossman? I was in charge of the gang. We were engaged both in planting and canecutting.

13248. Had any of the gang previous experience of canecutting? Some had, and some had not.

13249. Were you satisfied with the work, and did you earn a fair wage? We were satisfied with the terms. They were paying the men 25s. a week and found for field work, and 30s. a week and found for canecutting.

13250. How long did it take you to cut cane to the satisfaction of the superintendent? An intelligent man can learn canecutting in less than twenty-four hours.

13251. How long did it take before you were able to do a fair day's work at it? I should say that on the second or third day a man was equal to a man who had been at it for months.

13252. *By Mr. Paget*: Without feeling too tired? The question of being tired is not in it at all. To men engaged in almost any laborious work in town, canecutting is only child's play. There is nothing difficult or hard about it. There is one thing I would like to mention with regard to Mr. Young's statements about the Labour Bureau. I said just now that it was through Mr. Young that the negotiations were opened up which led to our being employed by the Mossman Central Mill Company. Carpenters, bricklayers, and other tradesmen scarcely ever think of going to the Labour Bureau to register themselves as unemployed, so that Mr. Young's monthly returns are in no way a criterion as to the actual number of unemployed in Townsville.

13253. *By the Chairman*: Have you any knowledge of what the state of the labour market is at the present time? In the building trade things are very dull.

13254. I do not mean tradesmen and mechanics, but the ordinary labouring class? Recently a lot of men have gone North to the sugar districts and other places.

13255. We were told yesterday that there are between forty and fifty unemployed here, but we cannot hear of them from any other source—Do you think there are that number? I quite believe there are more.

JOHN HUNTER, Cane Farmer, examined:

13256. *By the Chairman*: What are you? I come from the Clarence River, where I was farming.

13257. On what subject do you wish to speak? I came up here several months ago to buy a farm, and I heard this howl about labour, so I held off for the time being. I decided then to "hump blney," to see what the condition of the labour market really was and what was to be feared. I have been six months at that, and I am quite satisfied, if any of these ruined men come along and offer me a farm, to take it.

J. Hunter.
25 May, 1906.

13258. *By Mr. Paget*: You are prepared to take it on for nothing? No; I am not.

13259. *By Mr. Nielson*: You have not discovered that the price of farms has gone down? No; it has gone up. I have lost a couple of hundred pounds by not buying six months ago. I have been all along these rivers, and you cannot hear of a farm now.

- J. Hunter. 13260. *By the Chairman*: Have you done any work during the six months you have been here? Off and on I have worked.
- 25 May, 1906. 13261. How do you find the climate compare with that of the Clarence River? I found the Johnstone River climate very like that of the Big Scrub on the Richmond River before it was opened up. It was muggy and hot where there was timber; but as soon as it was opened up it was more like the Burdekin climate. As for labour, I think there is plenty.
13262. Were there many "wasters" among the men you came in contact with when you were travelling? There was not an undue proportion of "wasters." A lot of the men, especially of those who had been at it for a while, were very sober, steady fellows.
13263. Have you got a farm yet? No. I am taking a contract, and employing labour myself. I am in here buying horses. Taking it all through, the men resent the slurs cast upon them by a large section of the North Queensland Press, which condemns white labour without giving it a fair trial. That is doing more harm than good. I intended to say something about child labour, but his lordship the bishop has covered the ground much better than I could have done it.
13264. You agree with his lordship that there is a danger of children being employed prematurely in the cane fields? Yes. I would like to add that, taking them all round, the farmers grasp too much.
13265. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you mean that they are too greedy? Yes. Taken as a class, although I belong to them, I consider they are too grasping and sweating. They will often deny themselves little necessities in order to gain a few paltry pounds.
13266. On the Clarence River are there many young fellows—farmers' sons or farm labourers—who would be attracted to Queensland by the rates of wages or contract prices now being offered for cane work? Yes; many of them. I have employed labour myself and I know the difference. I started very early as a farmer, as I took up a selection on the Clarence River when I was just of age. I only sold out six months ago to come up here, and would have speculated in a farm straight away only for this bowl about labour. I was offered too glowing terms to believe they were true compared with the price of land down where I came from.
13267. *By the Chairman*: Are you satisfied that if you had invested at that time you could have got on all right? Yes; and I would have been about £200 in pocket instead of kicking about the country.
13268. *By Mr. Nielson*: If the labour conditions in Queensland were made known in your district, do you think they would attract single young men or farm labourers? There are a great number coming up now to the Johnstone River, and, if they only knew what I know, there would be far more of them coming.
13269. Do you think the Queensland sugar districts are not sufficiently known on the Clarence and Richmond Rivers? No. Whether they have an axe to grind or not I do not know, but for some reason they are condemned down there, and there are scares about no labour and about black men—they are going to get the kanaka back or have the time extended. There are really very few who will come up now.
13270. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you not know that there are gangs of men already engaged down there to come to the sugar districts of North Queensland this year? Yes. I think the terms on which land is offered up here will suit them.
13271. *By the Chairman*: Do you think that young men who wish to marry and settle in life would come here if they could get land? Yes; if they knew the land up here and the terms, they would come in droves. They have no land in New South Wales like the Johnstone River, if it was opened up; and the Burdekin district has a splendid climate.

THOMAS FOLEY, Waterside Worker, and Secretary of the Waterside Workers' Union, examined:

- T. Foley. 13272. *By the Chairman*: If you would give us your evidence in your own way it would be better for us? I want to speak more particularly about the alleged scarcity of labour in North Queensland. I want to say that, in my opinion, there is no necessity for the cry that white labour is scarce up here. I believe there are any amount of men willing and able to carry on the sugar industry even after the kanakas are deported. In fact, I feel that at the present time there are more men available than can be employed in the industry who are wanting work. I have had some experience in this matter with regard to the engaging of labour for the different districts in North Queensland, and I always found that I got more applications from men willing to work than are required.
- 25 May, 1906. 13273. Do you make use of the Labour Bureau here? Not as a means of living, but only to assist men to get work.
13274. You recommend men to go there? Yes.
13275. Occasionally the bureau is the means of getting work for the men? Yes; I have assisted Mr. Young on several occasions to get men. Mr. Young has no means of knowing these men, and he applies to me to give him some assistance. I get him the men and he sends them away. Besides that, farmers have written to me asking me to send them up gangs of men, and I have done it without consulting Mr. Young at all.
13276. Have the men you have sent out given satisfaction? Yes.
13277. *By Mr. Nielson*: When these men return from the sugar districts how do they express themselves? They say that the work in the cane fields is the most congenial they have ever tackled. One man I have known since he was a boy told me that there was no work that he tackled that he liked so well as canecutting. He had been driving a grocer's cart, and had done various kinds of work, but he liked canecutting the best. I also had a letter from Mr. W. Niven, of Charters Towers, telling me that he had 180 men on his unemployed list, and they wanted to be placed in the sugar districts. They prefer the Burdekin district, but would take any other.
13278. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you had any experience of canecutting yourself? No; I have never worked in a cane field at all.
13279. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are there many men unemployed in Townsville at the present time? There are a good few, although not so many as there were a month ago. A great many have gone away to the various cane districts.
13280. *By Mr. Paget*: How many? Several have gone in gangs. Two or three gangs have gone to Mossman. They were engaged in Townsville and they went away. After they left I received a letter

from the secretary of the Sugar Workers' Union at Mossman asking me to prevent any men from going as there were 100 men out of work there who could not get anything to do.

13281. *By the Chairman:* When was that? A month ago.

13282. We were at Mossman on the 4th of May and there were no 100 idle men there then? That is what he told me.

13283. *By Mr. Paget:* Was it Mr. Francis who wrote to you? Yes.

13284. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think if the Labour Bureau were properly organised and interchanged statistics regularly with similar institutions in other centres it would be of advantage to men out of work? Yes.

13285. It would facilitate men in getting work? Yes. It would let them know where work can be got. I had a letter saying there was work for carpenters at Cairns. I communicated this to the men who were unemployed, and that was the only means they had of learning about work outside the town.

13286. *By Mr. Paget:* When we were at Mossman Mr. Francis said there were seventy-five members in the Sugar Workers' Union, and that there was not sufficient floating population to supply the labour after this season? There are scores of men in Townsville who would only be too glad to get a constant job.

13287. They can get constant jobs if they are reliable and steady men—The evidence we have had shows that it is intemperance that keeps men out of work? Yes; a few of them.

T. Foley.

25 May, 1906.

(Charters Towers.)

SATURDAY, 26 MAY, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

FREDERICK MARTINDALE, Barber, carrying on business at Queenton, examined:

13288. *By Mr. Nielson:* You are running what is known as the Unemployed Association, at Charters Towers? Yes; Mr. Niven and myself conduct an association of unemployed workers on the Towers for the purpose of trying to find work for them in the sugar industry.

F. Martindale.

13289. How many unemployed are there on the Towers at the present time? There are fully 600 men out of employment at the present time, in addition to which there are at least 100 men who only work broken time.

26 May, 1906.

13290. How many men have you on your books at the present time? I produce a list containing 296 names, showing their ages, their addresses, whether married or single, and the occupations they have been in the habit of following. Many of these have had experience in the sugar industry, both as cane cutters, general labourers, and farm hands. There are only twenty men over fifty years of age on the list, and there are 110 of twenty years and under, down to sixteen.

13291. What is the basis on which you run your labour agency? We run it purely voluntarily, and make no charge whatever.

13292. How long would it take you to get these men together? One advertisement in the local paper would bring them all within twenty-four hours. There are 200 to 300 boys leaving school within the next two years who cannot be absorbed by the mining industry.

13293. Have you heard any opinions expressed by the men who have already had experience in the sugar industry? The men from the Towers who have been through a sugar season, and returned here, have stated generally that they prefer the open-air field work to underground work, and that it is much easier and healthier.

13294. Have the men who returned expressed themselves as being satisfied with the money earned? Yes.

13295. Have they given any opinion as to the general conditions under which they worked in the sugar industry? Yes. I am satisfied from what I learned from these men that good tucker, well cooked, is one of the main features in the successful working of the sugar industry by white labour.

13296. How do you do about the passages of men who cannot afford to pay their train fares to the coast? We have no trouble with the Railway Department. When I send a man to the Railway Department with a note to say he is engaged to work in the sugar industry he is supplied with a pass to Townsville. The coastal fare would have been previously arranged for by the employer, and there is an arrangement by which the employer deducts the fare for the steamer, and the police in the district where the man works collect the amount of his railway fare. I get the railway pass in the first instance through the police on the Towers.

13297. Have you had any trouble at all in getting railway passes? The only trouble has been with the Ayr Tramway people. They refuse to recognise the railway passes issued by the authorities here.

13298. Are the men engaged through you? Yes. We get agreements sent to us for signature by the men. I have one now from Mr. L. C. Horton, of Geraldton, for eight men. The men will peruse the agreement and sign it, and, if they are satisfied, they are then engaged by me. I then wire their names to the employer and he arranges for the steamer passages.

WILLIAM NIVEN, Secretary of the Unemployed Association, examined:

13299. *By Mr. Nielson:* You have heard the evidence given by Mr. Martindale—Do you endorse it? Yes.

W. Niven.

13300. You have heard complaints from the sugar districts that there is a percentage of intemperate men? Yes.

26 May, 1906.

13301. Do you try to guard against sending intemperate men from here to the sugar industry? Yes. The men are practically all personally known to us, and we do not send any men that we know are not

- W. Niven, reliable owing to their intemperate habits, and I agree that such men should not be sent from here. We are making every endeavour not to do so, and I think we will succeed as we know every one personally.
- 26 May, 1906. 13302. Are there many men contemplating going to the sugar districts to cut cane on contract? Yes. Gangs are now being formed from among the residents in the different quarters of Charters Towers, and they are forming these to rival one another, just as each quarter of Charters Towers has a cricket club or football club.
13303. Are there any men from the Towers who are trying to secure contracts in the industry for Towers men? Yes; Mr. J. R. Thompson, who is now in the Ayr district, was out of work. He went to Ayr to look for work, and volunteered to represent us there. He is trying to find work for gangs.
13304. Is he a married man? Yes.
13305. Are the married men who are on your books anxious to settle in the sugar industry? Yes; most of the married men would like to be able to settle in the sugar industry if they got a chance.
13306. Who paid the expenses of Mr. Thompson in going away to look for work? Mr. Thompson went first at his own expense, as he thought he would get work in the off season. He was very short of money, and was not able to get work at once, although he is a good man. We consulted a few of the public men on the Towers, and collected £2 5s. 6d. for Mr. Thompson's family. He has since obtained work, and hopes to get work for other men. He is working for £1 a week and tucker.
13307. Have you seen the rates of wages which are offering in the sugar districts? Yes; they are posted in the window of Mr. Martindale's shop.
13308. Are the men satisfied with those wages? The men are quite satisfied with the wages offered, and are willing to go.
13309. Do you think if a labour bureau properly organised were established in Queensland with a branch on the Towers and other populous centres that it would be of benefit to the men? Yes. Such a bureau, where up-to-date information could be obtained both by worker and employer as to the state of the labour market, would be to the men's benefit.
13310. Do the men object to going to the present Labour Bureau? I think they do.
13311. Why do you think that? The Labour Bureau is at the courthouse and the men do not like having to hang about the courthouse, or be suspected of looking for charity.
13312. Do you think that the relief should be separate from the bureau? Yes.
13313. With regard to the railway fares, can you give any suggestions? Yes. I think a ticket should be issued on credit if a man has a job to go to, and he should give an order for payment on his employer.
13314. Can you suggest anything to better the prospects of the unemployed on the Towers? I think a tropical agricultural college or farm should be established in the North, where young men could be taught tropical agriculture. It would be a good thing for the young men.
13315. Have you seen the various suggestions which have been made with regard to workers' home-steads? Yes; and I think if the farmers would cut up part of their estates into blocks, say, of 5 acres and upwards, according to the quality of the land, where a worker could build a house for himself and family, it would be a good thing for the settlement of the labour problem in connection with the sugar industry.
13316. Is there a prospect of many parents desiring to let their boys go into farming districts with a view to allowing them to become agriculturists? Yes; I know many parents who would like their boys to get away from the Towers and go to the agricultural districts. Boy workers are plentiful here; but I think if boys go to farms they should be supervised a bit after working hours, so that their conduct might be kept at a good standard. I might say that there are a lot of old men on the Towers who cannot any longer get work at mining, and many of them would like to get light constant work on a farm, such as feeding horses, chipping, gardening, and so forth.
13317. Is there any subject in connection with the remuneration of the men on which you wish to give any evidence? Yes; I think that in many cases the keeping back of 25 per cent. of the wages is not a good thing. The percentage is excessive. A man also sometimes loses his 25 per cent. through no fault of his own. I think it is excessive because the sum total of his wages is small, and in some cases it is 5s. out of £1, which is about the average wages in the sugar district.
13318. Are you not aware that the withholding of 25 per cent. refers mostly to contract work, and rarely, if ever, to wages? I was not aware of that. I understood it referred to wages as well as to contract.

PATRICK MEHAN, Sugar Worker, examined:

- P. Mehan, 13319. By Mr. Nielson: When did you last work in the industry? I only left Ingham a week ago and I am going back again next week.
- 26 May, 1906. 13320. How long were you working? I worked for Mr. Ogston, at Ingham, for eleven months. That was my last place.
13321. In what capacity were you employed? I worked at general farm work right through.
13322. Were you cutting cane last season? No; I was kept at general farm work.
13323. What wages did you get? I got £1 a week and tucker during the whole of the eleven months.
13324. Were wet days deducted? No; I never had any wet days stopped.
13325. Were you satisfied with those wages? Yes; I was perfectly satisfied. Before I went to the sugar districts I was mining on the Towers. I was getting £2 10s. a week trucking. I can save more money at £1 a week and tucker at Ingham than I could out of £2 10s. a week on the Towers. I am perfectly satisfied to work for £1 a week and tucker on a cane farm all through, wet or dry.
13326. Have you ever cut cane? Yes; I have cut cane in the Mackay district at 25s. a week and found. I was satisfied with that.
13327. How did the white cane-cutters work at Ingham last season so far as you saw? On the whole they worked well. The gangs I saw were sober on the whole. Some of the gangs broke up, many because they could not agree among themselves. The good men I know prefer cutting on wages for a farmer to cutting for a contractor on wages.
13328. You stated that you were returning to Ingham? Yes. I am going back again this coming week. There is no prospect of work on the Towers, and I can get plenty of work in the Ingham district.
13329. Are the Charters Towers men satisfied with the wages they are getting in the Ingham district? All the men I know are perfectly satisfied.

ARTHUR DEAN, Clerk of Petty Sessions at Charters Towers, examined :

13330. *By Mr. Nielson* : Are you officer in charge of the Labour Bureau ? Yes.
 13331. Have you had many applications for work ? No ; I have had no applications made to me since March, 1905. In January, February, and March, 1905, I had from 200 to 300 applications.
 13332. Were you able to do anything for those men ? Yes ; the Police Magistrate assisted men to go out prospecting.
 13333. How many were thus assisted ? About eighty men.
 13334. Have employers ever applied to you for men ? No ; employers never apply to the bureau for men, as there are always plenty of men going about asking for work.
 13335. Is the number of men out of work increasing ? Yes. During the last few years there has been an increasing number of men out of work.
 13336. Do you know anything of the Unemployed Association on the Towers ? Yes ; the Unemployed Association are doing good work so far as I can see.
 13337. Can you suggest anything to make the labour bureau a live one ? The Government Labour Bureau has not been a live one, and in order to be so it would require an officer's whole time in the larger centres to run it.
 13338. Do you know whether there are many men on the Towers who would go to the sugar districts for work ? Yes ; there are many. I am sure if I advertised for fifty men to-morrow morning I would have over 100 applications within two hours.
 13339. Mr. Martindale informed me that there were fully 600 men unemployed on the Towers to-day ; do you think that is correct ? I have no reason whatever to doubt it, and Mr. Martindale is in a much better position to know it than myself.

A. Dean.
 26 May, 1906.

(Maryborough.)

TUESDAY, 5 JUNE, 1906.

PRESENT :

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.
 MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

ALFRED BENJAMIN MARTIN, Manager of Mount Bauple Central Sugar Mill, examined :

13340. *By the Chairman* : You are manager of the Mount Bauple Central Sugar Mill ? Yes.
 13341. That is one of the central mills which are now controlled by the Government ? Yes.
 13342. How long have you been manager ? Seven years.
 13343. During that time what has been your experience with regard to the labour that you have required ? Up to two years ago the greater part of the labour employed in the district was coloured labour.
 13344. But in the mill ? The labour in the mill has always been white, and we have never had any difficulty in procuring men.
 13345. You have a knowledge of the conditions obtaining amongst the farmers in the district as regards labour ? Yes.
 13346. Do you anticipate that the exodus of the kanaka will make any material difference to the district ? That is governed by other conditions.
 13347. I am not speaking of the cost, but will there be any difficulty in supplying the demand ? Owing to our being so near the large labour centres there will be no difficulty in procuring labour, provided the farmers get a price which will enable them to pay for it.
 13348. What wages are paid for ordinary field work ? During the last two seasons it has been done by contract, the prices ranging from 10s. to 17s. 6d. an acre for chipping.
 13349. *By Mr. Paget* : And for trashing ? A contract is generally let for trashing, cutting, and loading, and the price covers the whole of those operations.
 13350. *By the Chairman* : You do not trash until you cut ? They have been paying 6d. a ton extra for trashing. Three or four men may take a contract for trashing, cutting, and loading 1,000 or 1,200 tons, and they start trashing. By the time the trashing is completed the mill is ready to start, and the first cane has then been trashed six weeks.
 13351. Are the men who take those contracts mostly local men ? They are all local men. If Mount Bauple had to depend on taking men off the road it would be a sorry day for them. Men who have to carry a swag about the country never stop anywhere. The men that Mount Bauple growers get have been coming back for two or three seasons.
 13352. *By Mr. Paget* : They are residents of Maryborough and Tibana ? Yes.
 13353. *By the Chairman* : What is the distance of the nearest public-house from the Mount Bauple mill ? Seven miles.
 13354. Then you do not have much trouble through intemperance ? No.
 13355. *By Mr. Paget* : Not with your mill hands, at any rate ? None whatever. In fact, the police reckon it is the quietest district they have been in.
 13356. *By the Chairman* : Then there need be no trouble with regard to labour ? I do not expect any trouble, provided they are able to pay the money.
 13357. You have had experience as a cane-grower as well as in manufacturing ? Yes. We have done a good deal of cane-growing as well.
 13358. What can you afford to pay for chipping by the week ? The rate of wages fixed in the Mount Bauple district by the Cane-growers' Association for field work in the off season ranges from £1 a week and food for able men, and from 15s. to 18s. a week and food for elderly and infirm men.
 13359. And there is no difficulty in getting men to take those rates ? No. In the season they fixed for day wages from £1 to 25s. a week and food.

A. B. Martin.
 5 June, 1906.

- A. B. Martin. 13360. *By Mr. Paget*: For what class of work? For general hands, £1 to 22s. 6d. a week—that is, for horse-driving or work of that sort. Cane-cutters get 25s. weekly wages, and their board.
- 5 June, 1906. 13361. And at that rate of wages are the farmers able to get a sufficiency of labour? Yes. They have had no trouble so far, and practically all the labour for this season is already engaged.
13362. At those rates? Yes. There is also a lot of contract work coming on. The Bauple Farmers' Association have fixed those as the schedule rates they are going to pay.
13363. For this year? Yes.
13364. And they are rates the men are prepared to accept? The men are accepting them.
13365. *By the Chairman*: In your opinion, as long as the bounty is continued, can those wages be paid? Yes. So long as the present price of cane is maintained, and the labour is available, the farmers can make the conditions sufficient to attract the labour, and there will be no trouble about carrying on the industry in the Bauple district.
13366. *By Mr. Nielson*: What are you paying for cane? The average price paid last year was 12s. 1d., delivered at the mill.
13367. *By Mr. Paget*: What did the farmer get? It is a schedule rate. It varies from 11s. up to 13s. 3d. per ton, according to the distance from the mill.
13368. Is the farmer who is at a greater distance from the mill paid a higher rate for his cane than the man who is next door to the mill? Yes.
13369. He is allowed a certain sum for cartage? Yes. The price he is paid varies from 11s. to 13s. 3d. As the distance from the mill increases, so the price he is paid increases.
13370. What is the net price the farmer receives for his cane? 10s. per ton loaded on the dray or wagon.
13371. Then according to the distance the farm is from the mill he is allowed a cartage rate of so much per mile? Yes.
13372. That brings the average cost up to 12s. 1d. per ton? Yes.
13373. Can you tell us whether the plantings this year have been increased or not? The tendency is to increase the plantings all the time.
13374. *By Mr. Nielson*: The area under cane at your mill is increasing? Yes.
13375. *By the Chairman*: At the present time the cane crop is not up to the mill power? We have not a sufficient area of land to grow enough cane to keep the mill going up to its full power.
13376. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you not laying down some miles of tramway with the object of increasing the cane area? Yes. Seven miles of tramway of 3-feet 6-inch gauge will be laid down immediately after the crushing is over to connect the Government railway line with the mill.
13377. That will materially increase the area available for the mill? Exactly. By the time we reach the Government line we shall have opened up 1,000 acres of land which is not available at the present time.
13378. *By the Chairman*: What sort of land is that? Scrub land.
13379. Is it held privately or by the Crown? A small portion of it is held by the Crown, but the bulk of it is held privately.
13380. *By Mr. Paget*: By means of this new line you will be able to take cane from near to Nambour? Yes; we shall take cane from Cooroy and Coorau.
13381. Will the cane stand that carriage? Yes. It requires a certain number of thousands of tons of cane to make the mill pay, and we can afford to give so much more for the extra cane we shall get. On the whole, the sugar industry at Bauple is on the up grade, and the farmers certainly take more interest in their work than they used to do previously.
13382. *By the Chairman*: How are you for frost up there? We have the shelter of the mountain, and, on the whole, the frost has not done us any harm.
13383. On which side of the mountain are you? On the eastern side.
13384. You are sheltered from the westerly winds? Yes.
13385. *By Mr. Paget*: You fear drought more than frost? Yes. The small rainfall is our biggest enemy.

(Nambour.)

THURSDAY, 7 JUNE, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) |

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

WILLIAM ALFRED CRIBB, Cane Farmer, examined:

- W. A. Cribb. 13386. *By the Chairman*: You are a cane farmer? Yes.
- 7 June, 1906. 13387. What is the area of your farm? 640 acres, 200 acres of which are registered for white labour.
13388. Is 200 acres your total area under cane? Yes; I am a white grower only.
13389. How long have you been engaged in the occupation? Since 1903.
13390. Have you always employed white labour? Always.
13391. What wages are you paying for ordinary field work in the slack season? 5s., and the leaders of gangs 5s. 6d. per day.
13392. *By Mr. Paget*: They find themselves? Yes.
13393. *By the Chairman*: What do you pay in the harvesting season? 6s. and 6s. 6d. per day.
13394. *By Mr. Paget*: Those wages are only for cutting and loading? Yes.
13395. I suppose you pay the same wages for field work in the crushing season as in the off season? Yes. We have arranged to provide for a lower rate of wages for 1907. The district generally had a meeting recently and arranged a standard rate of wages. The idea was that, as the North is now making a demand upon our skilled labour, and we are easily accessible to the city for "out of works" we would have to use some raw, unfit material, and we therefore propose to give 1s. less for inexperienced men.

13396. What do you pay ploughmen? My ploughmen are paid £5 and £5 10s. a month and found. W. A. Cribb.
They are employed by the month. I do some boarding, for which I charge 10s. a week.

13397. *By Mr. Paget:* Are the men generally satisfied with the rations you supply? I have heard no7 June, 1906.
complaints. I keep my men through their being so satisfied. I eat the same food and at the same table with them.

13398. *By the Chairman:* Have you had any difficulty in getting the white labour you require? I have a standard of about twenty men, and I have been through 400 to pick out twenty reliable men within a period of three years.

13399. What has been the cause of the unsuitability of the men you have had to reject? I have studied the question pretty carefully, and my conclusion is that one-third are "drunks" pure and simple, one-third are physically or mentally unfit for full wages, and another small percentage do not like working long in one place—they are nomadic in their instincts. I have been able to secure about twenty-five men out of the whole lot.

13400. What is the nearest hotel to your property? Half a mile from the nearest point, and one mile to our quarters.

13401. How many hotels are there within a distance of one mile? Two.

13402. Those are the hotels in this town? Yes.

13403. Would an increase in the number of hotels react upon the quality of the labour that you employ? I think it would slightly affect it. On the other hand, you may argue that, if a man wants the stuff and it is at all accessible, he will get it. Personally, I think the presence of hotels has a very bad effect upon the class of labour offering. They seem to be particularly addicted to liquor.

13404. That class of labour is particularly addicted to intemperance? Yes, in this district. We are so close to the city that men can easily tramp up here. The men who come to this district are noted for being inclined to drink.

13405. If you read the evidence that has been taken before this Commission you would see that the distance from the city has not got much to do with it? Well, the city men can easily tramp up here.

13406. *By Mr. Nielson:* Our experience has been that the further you get away from the cities the worse the drought? In this district they are so accessible to the city.

13407. *By the Chairman:* You are of opinion that that might be the cause of it? Yes.

13408. Well, the contrary is the case—You have no scarcity of labour here, and you have plenty to pick and choose from? I have not got plenty of good men to pick and choose from. I am a bit anxious about getting good, competent men this year. I had a large crushing last year, but it will be double this year. I have some trouble now in getting skilled men, and I shall have to work poorer men, and that will have a bad effect on the experienced cutters, and keep them back. Some of the men I had last year have gone North, because they have been offered higher wages. Two other men in my employ have been offered as high as 8s. a day to go to the extreme North in the crushing season, but they were satisfied to be employed all the year round with me rather than take a temporary advance in the North.

13409. You say there are still openings in this district for a good class of labour? The known good man does not go begging for work. Last season I was crushing up to the end of November or the beginning of December, when the cultivating and planting operations came on. I could not get the labour I wanted, and I had to put on any labour I could get. The Bundaberg district was beginning to draw upon our labour then, and I could not get my yearly cleaning done, as I had to wait for my cutters.

13410. Is much of the labour you employ that of men settled in the locality? I make it a principle to give employment to the young settlers living around the district, and then I employ what labour I want from the casuals.

13411. I suppose there are no Crown lands on which increased settlement could take place? There are some Crown lands, but they are not fit for sugar-growing.

13412. But for homestead settlement? They would do for dairying.

13413. I mean farmers' homes, where men could settle, and yet you could employ their labour? I think not. They are not sufficiently accessible.

13414. *By Mr. Nielson:* When you want men where do you apply for them? I have been most successful by telling my young men to get their friends to come.

13415. *By the Chairman:* Through what channel? When I was living in Brisbane I knew a number of old settlers, and I got them. I obtained them in Brisbane, but they are not city men. I have got other men from the cities—men who were navvies—but they were not suitable for our cane clipping, as they could only hold a hoe the one way. They used it like a pick, and you could not get them out of the habit.

13416. *By Mr. Paget:* What area of cane did you crush last year? 65 acres.

13417. For what tonnage? Under 1,900 tons.

13418. You practically had no difficulty in getting your crop off other than the disability of having to lose a number of men from your employment? Yes.

13419. You said just now that the district took into consideration the rates of wages to be paid to the inexperienced men; have you any Farmers' Association here? We are in the course of formation. We have had one meeting, and our next meeting is to enrol members and elect officers.

13420. When you used the word "district" just now, did you mean to infer that the canegrowers of this district had met together and decided upon the rate of wages? A public meeting was called for the purpose of declaring a rate of wages according to the provision whereby the Minister for Customs has power to question the payment of bounty on the rate of wages.

13421. For the current year? Yes. The cultivation will start in January next, so we met before the crushing commenced. We took time by the forelock and arranged the rates of wages for next year. The producing of the cane as well as the cutting of the cane will be a factor in the Minister's decision regarding the bounty payable.

13422. I take it that it is not the intention of the canegrowers in this district to reduce the rate of wages paid to competent men? Not at all. The tendency will be the other way.

13423. You mean that the apprentices as it were—although they are men they are apprentices to the work—were considered by the farmers not to be entitled to as good pay as those who knew how to do the work? Yes. I have had boot operatives working in the canefields, and they are not at all suitable. We had a

W. A. Cribb, large number of boot operatives here. When the tariff came in and the boot factories were dismantled in Brisbane, we had them flocking here. We are so close to the city that when anything like that happens we are the first place to call at. They will tramp up here with their swags in numbers. We are so close to the largest city in Queensland that we have to be prepared to have this labour offering. Then with regard to my own men, particularly in the last two months, before the crushing has started, letters have been sent to them from other districts—in fact, they have been besieged with letters and telegrams—asking them to come North. Two men working for me have been offered a higher rate to go North, but they refuse to go. It shows that I am unhappily situated, and next year I shall have to give a higher wage.

13424. *By Mr. Nielson*: It shows you have good men, because 8s. are not the general wages in the North? The district I speak of is the Burdekin Delta. I have got good men, and I try to keep them.

13425. *By the Chairman*: The rates up North are 20s. a week and rations in the off season, and 25s. a week and rations in the crushing season? Well, I pay 26s. a week and rations. I also give the leaders of my gangs who are engaged in chipping or field work 6d. a day extra.

13426. *By Mr. Nielson*: In the Burdekin district the rate of wages is 25s. a week and found in the crushing season? Our wages are 26s. and 29s. a week.

13427. *By the Chairman*: And in the Burdekin district they pay 5s. a day and found for cutting and loading? I give 6s. a day.

13428. *By Mr. Nielson*: You must not think that the rates of wages up there are so high as to make you lose all your men? My men tell me different, and leave me on that account.

13429. *By the Chairman*: They are misled? Well they go to appointments.

13430. They may be special men? They are men who have been there before—they are proved men.

13431. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you anticipate any difficulty in getting sufficient labour to carry on after the present year? Owing to the inducement given by the Customs regulations last year, the registered areas in the Bundaberg district increased so largely that I could not get labour to do my planting and early cleaning in November and December, so that I anticipate difficulty this year.

13432. There are some 6,000 islanders who are now working in the industry, who may not be able to work after this year.—What about the labour conditions then? That will accentuate the difficulty very much.

13433. How do you propose to supply the deficiency? I am putting on more men than I require, and am paying £30 a month more in order to have men for the coming season. I am doing dead work to keep the men round me, because I anticipate great difficulty.

13434. And what about next year? I am going to carry them through.

13435. You hope to be able to provide yourself with sufficient labour by doing that? Yes; and I am prepared to furl my sails and not increase my area. It has been my principle, as leases fall into my hands, to take them up and cultivate the land myself. I had a little touch of trouble over labour last year, and everything seems to indicate that I shall have trouble this year through having to put up with very inferior men from the city; and, if so, I shall have to curtail my operations.

13436. *By the Chairman*: Have you any reliable information as to the condition of the labour market in New South Wales or Victoria? I employed three Victorians last year, and I have one now.

13437. Have you got any information from them as to whether there is any surplus labour in their State? I asked them to look out for good young fellows down there for me, but so far neither of them has been able to get any at the wages. They think that is partly due to the fact that there is a bad impression down there that Queensland is very hot, and men do not care to come. The men I had were such splendid fellows that I wished to get more of the same stamp; but it is the busy season with them when it is the busy season with us.

13438. From that, you are of opinion that there is no great surplus of labour in the southern States? I do not know about New South Wales—I have never tested it; but I have been in touch with Victoria, and my impression is that we shall get no men from Victoria, because wheat and other crops have to be harvested during the sugar-crushing season.

13439. Then do you favour the idea of immigration to supply the deficiency which you imagine will exist in the future? I certainly do. It seems to be our only hope.

13440. *By Mr. Paget*: That is, immigration of agricultural labourers? Yes.

13441. *By the Chairman*: I suppose you are aware that the supply of agricultural labourers is limited all over the world; but the men you require need not be agricultural labourers? Canada seems to be making an abnormal demand for agricultural labourers, and she seems to be getting an abnormal supply of that very class.

13442. Do you know that they are agricultural labourers? I have been told by people who have been there that a large proportion of them are.

13443. The men you require need not be agricultural labourers so long as they are accustomed to manual labour? If they are able-bodied, industrious, and sober men, with a little nous, I could train them.

13444. You do not mean that they must have been brought up on farms, but that you do not want mere mechanics? I do not want men who are mechanics and nothing else, and who cannot get out of a groove. I find a large percentage of men like that.

13445. You can deal with raw material? Yes; provided they have the faculty of adapting themselves to the conditions of the industry.

13446. *By Mr. Paget*: Do you know the conditions of any of the islanders settled in the district? I know a good deal about them.

13447. Can you tell us how many there are? No.

13448. I presume they are leaseholders? Yes; I know twenty or thirty of them.

13449. How long have they been settled on the land? Some were settled before I came here, and have been here almost from the inception of the mill, five or six years ago.

13450. Are they cane-growing? Yes.

13451. Are they married? Some of them are, and some of them are not.

13452. Are they married to women from their own islands? No. One is married to a half-caste—American negro and white. Two or three are married to aborigines.

13453. Are any islanders entering into leases this year? Yes. Some who have gone from our property are taking up leases in other parts.

13454. You were leasing land to islanders? Yes. We do not lease land now. When we bought the W. A. Cribb property the mill could not get a quarter of its crushing capacity supplied, and we set to work to do all we could to assist it. We advertised, first of all, for white lessees, but only got three responses. 7 June, 1906. We found we had to finance them, and we had to buy them out in the end, as they could not make a success of it. When we found we could not get white lessees, as we had received a lot of applications from kanakas—friends of those who were on the place when we bought it—we let several of them have land.

13455. You did that in your own interests as shareholders, as well as in the interests of the mill? Yes; but we were doing this before as a family. We had lent to the extent of £2,000 or £3,000 to farmers. We are not giving any fresh leases, and, as leases fall in, we are putting the land under cane ourselves.

13456. You are continuing the cultivation? Yes.

13457. What were the terms on which the leases were given? 1s. per ton royalty.

13458. And the term of lease? Generally five years.

13459. You think that, as their leases expire, they lease other lands in the district? I know some of them are doing it.

13460. Are they under the impression that if they lease land they will not be liable to deportation? They do not know; they are quite at sea on the matter. I have asked several what they are going to do, and whether it is worth their while leasing land and felling scrub if they are to be taken away a year afterwards, before they can get any return. They say they do not know; they cannot get any reliable information as to when they are to go and what they are to do; and they say that the only thing they can do is to go on in the hope that they will be able to get some return.

13461. Do you know if there is a provision in their leases by which they shall be paid compensation if they are deported before the expiration of their leases? Yes. I have taken a personal interest in them.

13462. Have you considered the question of deportation at all, either from the business point of view with respect to the shipping or from the humanitarian point of view? I have taken an interest in it from the social, economic, and humanitarian points of view.

13463. Would you like to say anything about it? I am afraid it would not affect the issue, otherwise I should like to say a jolly lot.

13464. *By the Chairman:* Can you suggest any scheme by which the islanders can be deported with as little hardship to them as possible? Where you have a splendid type of aboriginal woman—a real nice woman, superior really to a good many white women of the working class—married to a decent islander, and they have a nice healthy family, it would not be right to deport the husband to the Solomon Islands and leave the woman here. I certainly think such a man should be allowed to remain in Queensland on humanitarian grounds.

13465. What about islanders who have been in the State for ten, fifteen, or twenty years? I think it would be very hard to deport any who have been accustomed to the conditions of living here and who have lost touch with their relatives and associations in the islands.

13466. Would you be in favour of sending to the islands children who are attending the State schools? I am not in favour of that at all.

13467. *By Mr. Paget:* Do any of the children of Pacific Islanders attend the State schools in this district? A good many of them do, and they are competent and apt, and very nice mannered.

13468. *By the Chairman:* Can you offer any suggestions as to the way in which the deportation should be carried out? Some of the New Hebrides men tell me that in their group the difficulty will not arise, but I understand that the Solomon Islanders are improvident and that there is not a sufficient supply of food for a large body of people. I would like the Commonwealth to take the responsibility of seeing that agents are sent in advance to make provision for a supply of food and to prepare a plan for settling the people when they arrive.

13469. From the information you have you do not think the same danger exists in the New Hebrides? The New Hebrides men tell me they do not think there will be the same danger if a little time is given and too big batches are not sent at one time.

13470. Then you advocate caution and no undue haste in the work of deportation? That is so.

13471. Is there anything else? I do not quite gather the exact lines of the Commission.

13472. One of the objects is to see how to provide for labour when the kanakas go—you said you were in favour of the immigration of agricultural labourers? Yes.

13473. *By Mr. Paget:* Would you be prepared to pay half of the cost of introducing those labourers? Certainly not. My margin of cost and return is too small to take any risk.

13474. *By the Chairman:* Did you ever employ Polynesians? No.

13475. You know that the people who wanted Polynesian labour had to lay out a certain amount of money to get it? If I had a reliable agent at the other end, I would be prepared to pay something in the direction of importing labourers, provided they could be got for the same wages, or that I got an extra price for my cane to pay them.

WILFRID EMMANUEL DESPLACE, Manager of the Mureton Central Mill, examined:

13477. *By the Chairman:* How long have you been here? Two years.

13478. You had previous experience in the State? I have had twenty-one years' experience altogether.

13479. At the same sort of work? Yes. I have been fifteen years in Queensland, and six years in New South Wales.

13480. You employ white labour in the mill? Yes.

13481. What has been your experience this last year of supplying yourself with the labour you require? I have had no trouble whatsoever.

13482. Have you had plenty of men to select from? I have had plenty of men in the last two years.

13483. Have you had to go through many men to get the number you required? The first season I was at Nambour I had a big crowd of men to select from.

13484. And last year the conditions improved? Yes. Ninety per cent. of the good men returned to me last year.

13485. You have not had much trouble as regards intemperance? No; because the first drunken man I see I fire out of the place immediately, and I never allow him to loiter about the place.

W. E.
Displace.

7 June, 1906.

- W. E. Desplace.
7 June, 1906.
13486. You do not anticipate having any difficulty this year or next year? No. I make a strong point of not allowing any intemperance about the place, and there will be no difficulty.
13487. From your experience of white labour, what is the cause of the men being useless? Intemperance.
13488. Is that the main cause? That is 90 per cent. of the trouble.
13489. Are a large proportion of them physically unfit? I do not think so.
13490. You think intemperance is the chief reason of the unreliability of white labour? You must take into consideration that in a sugar-mill the average mill hand does not require any special strength, as it is very light work. The hours are long, but the work is light.
13491. Have you had any experience of white men working at field work? A little. I have had a farm of my own.
13492. *By Mr. Paget*: You worked with white labour? Yes, and with kanaka as well.
13493. Not under purely white labour conditions, then? I have a farm of my own now which is carried on under white labour conditions.
13494. You have no difficulty in getting labour? No. My cutting is let by contract, and the man in charge of the farm is doing well. I have not been to the farm for two years, but I know that I can rely on him, and that he is doing his work well.
13495. *By Mr. Nielson*: Was there much drunkenness here last year? Very little. I do not think there was a single case before this court last season.
13496. *By Mr. Paget*: How do you pay your men, by cash or by cheque? Cash.
13497. Is there a branch of the savings bank here? Yes.
13498. And the men can avail themselves of its services if they wish? Yes.
13499. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you think in cultivation and field work there will be any difficulty in obtaining labour? I do not anticipate very much. They are all small growers here with the exception of Mr. Cribb, who is the largest grower we have.
13500. *By Mr. Paget*: They use family labour? Yes; it is mostly family labour.
13501. There are a number of alien growers connected with the Moreton Central Mill? Yes.
13502. Kanakas or Asiatics? They are all kanakas.
13503. Is the number increasing or decreasing? They are not increasing.
13504. *By the Chairman*: As regards this family labour, can you give us any idea whether there is any danger of children of too immature an age being employed in the cane-fields, as it has been explained that a danger which threatens the people working with family labour is that they employ their children and neglect their education—Have you seen any signs of that? Very little. There were one or two cases, but they are hardly worth taking into consideration, because no matter where you go you will find mean people who will take advantage of young children.
13505. You do not think it is a danger which threatens upon the adoption of white labour? Not in this district. I cannot speak for the North, as all my experience has been learned between Mundaberg and Nambour. I have not been further North than that.
13506. *By Mr. Nielson*: It has been suggested that, in order to keep men in the district, they should be settled on workers' homesteads—Have you formed any idea on that? It is a very wrong idea; it is false.
13507. *By Mr. Paget*: You do not approve of it? No, I do not approve of it.
13508. Why? The reason is that I do not know of any industry or any farming that can be cultivated for six months and neglected for the next six months.
13509. You are presuming that the workers on these homesteads will go in for farming? That is the understanding.
13510. What areas had you in mind when you formed that impression? Any area from 5 to 20 acres—say 5 acres. Do you expect a man to make a living on 5 acres during the off season?
13511. Part of the off season? For three months of the year, when the season is slack, if a man attempts to put 5 acres under cultivation in that time he will make a rank failure of the business.
13512. Looking at it from another point of view, might it not be advisable for workers such as we have in our minds to have a home where they could go to and not have to pay rent—say, at Nambour, Bundaberg, or Mackay—upon which, at any rate, a man's wife and children could grow something which would help things along, and where he could have a home, instead of wandering about the country? I do not approve of it. Even taking it from your point of view, I do not approve of men settling on workers' homesteads. If you could afford to give a man a home there, why not let him stop on the plantation and give him a home there? Why should you put him away in a forest paddock?
13513. *By the Chairman*: The owners of property will not do this sort of thing; they will not throw their land open for occupation? I was just giving you my opinion about the matter. If you want to obtain labour for the sugar industry, you must put them on small areas of cane which will give them employment all the year round.
13514. They will necessarily become employers of labour, because they will get the cane to such a stage that they will want the employers to assist them? No. If a man has 10 acres he can cultivate it with the assistance of one of his mates, and when crushing comes on they can work at the mill. When his cane requires cutting they can get off for a few days to take it off.
13515. *By Mr. Paget*: If the crop is any good they will not harvest 10 acres in a few days? Well, when the gang has finished cutting in the other paddocks they can cut the cane on the worker's homestead.
13516. You really think it would be preferable if the holdings were much smaller in area than at present? I should say 10 acres of good land would be ample. A man could cultivate 7 acres of it and keep 3 acres as a paddock to keep a horse and cow in. From 10 to 12 acres of land, with assistance from the mill in the crushing season, would keep a man very nicely.
13517. Do you care to give an opinion as to whether it would be necessary for the present bounty on white-grown sugar to be continued to enable the growers to pay the present rates of wages? Certainly, it is necessary.
13518. *By the Chairman*: Have you had anything to do with Pacific Islanders? A little. When I was managing Goodwood we had a good few cultivating the land.
13519. Have you given any thought to the question of deportation, or formulated any scheme? No; I have been too busy with my own business.

OTTO GUSTAVSON, Cane Farmer and a Native of Finland, examined :

13520. *By the Chairman* : You are a native of Finland ? Yes.

13521. And a cane farmer in the Nambour district ? Yes.

13522. How long have you been here ? About eight years.

13523. What is the area of your farm ? 36 acres.

13524. Are you satisfied with the results of your operations ? Yes ; since the bonus, but not before.

13525. I suppose you are registered ? Yes ; I have always employed white labour.

13526. In that case I suppose you think you cannot grow cane successfully with white labour without protection in the form of a bounty ? We can grow it, but not at 10s a ton.

13527. At the present price of cane you cannot grow it profitably unless you get a bounty ? No.

13528. *By Mr. Paget* : What price are you getting at present for your cane from the Moreton mill ? 10s. a ton.

Mr. Desplace : 10s. 6d. a ton.

Witness : Not all of us.

Mr. Desplace : 10s. 6d. last year.

Witness : Not all of us.

13529. *By the Chairman* : Are there many natives of Finland in the district ? There are twelve or thirteen.

13530. I suppose they are all farming ? Yes.

13531. Are they all doing fairly well ? Yes.

13532. Are they satisfied that they left Finland and came to Queensland ? They are, so far as I know.

13533. Are they better off than they would have been in Finland ? I think so.

13534. I suppose you all came from the country districts of Finland ? I was only fifteen years of age when I left Finland.

13535. Did these neighbours of yours come from the country districts ? Yes ; they were mostly farmers.

13536. I suppose they write home ? Yes.

13537. From what they have told you, do you think others would be willing to come from Finland if they could get ? There is one gentleman present who had a letter a fortnight ago saying that, after reading the letter he had written, telling how the Finns were doing here, the whole parish were willing to come to Queensland—rich and poor.

13538. What is the name of that parish ? Isajoki. There are between 6,000 and 7,000 people in the parish.

13539. Would they be able to pay their own passages ? They are asking for assistance in that. If that were done, they would have some means when they landed here.

13540. If they had their passages paid, they would bring a little money ? They all have more or less money. Some are pretty well to do, but most of them are only working men.

13541. *By Mr. Paget* : The 6,000 you mention includes men, women, and children ? Yes. There are close on 7,000.

13542. Then there would probably be about 1,500 men ? Yes.

13543. *By the Chairman* : There would be no difficulty in getting natives of Finland to come to Queensland if they were helped to come ? Any amount of them would be willing to come.

13544. *By Mr. Nielson* : But have they not to get permission from the Russian Government before they can leave the country ? It is many years since I left, but I had to get permission ; but I believe there are different laws in Finland since I left.

13545. I do not know about Finland, but a Russian who has been in Queensland for three years tells me that they have to pay £30 for a permit from the Russian Government or else bolt ? I do not think Finns have to do that. Those who are here had not to pay anything and neither had I.

13546. *By the Chairman* : Do you think that the Finns you speak of would be willing to pay their own passages to London if they got brought out from London ? I should think they would do that. Of course that is only a matter of a paltry £2.

13547. *By Mr. Paget* : If all those people came to Queensland, would they desire to settle down as a community on one block of land ? Yes.

13548. Have they said in what part of the country they would like to settle ? No : they have merely asked the question and they are waiting for an answer.

13549. *By the Chairman* : Have you ever been in North Queensland ? Yes.

13550. How far North ? I have been on the Bloomfield sugar plantations.

13551. Did you work there ? I was tin mining. There was a fire, and they were short of men, and a few of the tin miners went down. I did not start, but some of them did.

13552. Is that long ago ? It was before the big strike. I had just come from New Guinea at the time.

13553. Then you know something about North Queensland ? Yes ; a good bit.

13554. Do you think these people from Finland would like to go there ? I was there for years, and found no difficulty in working. I was working on the Cairns Railway line.

13555. If land were made available for them in that part of the State, would you feel justified in recommending them to go there ? Certainly. I lived and worked there for years on the tinfields and goldfields, and on the plantations. I was not working in the cane, but I worked on the Johnstone River tramline. I also worked about Cooktown, Herberton, and Cairns.

13556. *By Mr. Nielson* : Do any of your people own farms ? I own the one I am on.

13557. Are the others leaseholders ? Yes.

13558. *By Mr. Paget* : But the rent goes towards the purchase money ? Yes.

13559. *By Mr. Nielson* : What royalty did you pay ? 1s. a ton.

13560. How many years were you paying that ? It was a seven years' lease.

13561. How far have you got towards purchasing your farm ? I paid for mine eighteen months ago.

13562. With regard to the other men, are they getting on towards doing the same ? I believe a good few of them can pay at any time.

13563. Owing to the conditions under which the land was given to them, they are able to carry them out and make their land freehold ? I think so. There may be one or two with big families who fell back in their payments, but all the single men are right.

O. Gustavson.

7 June, 1906.

O. Gustavson. 13564. On the whole they have done fairly well? Yes.

13565. *By the Chairman:* They like the idea of getting hold of land of their own? Yes; they like to have their own little freehold.

13566. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many acres of cane have you had on an average amongst you, say, for each man? I have had up to 21 acres, and some at present have got 30 acres. The average would be from 15 to 25 acres each.

13567. Some have been able to make a living on 15 acres of cane and still put something towards the purchase of the farm out of it? Yes.

13568. *By Mr. Paget:* Did these friends of yours, whilst they were getting their farms in order, go out and work for other people at times to earn other money? They did a little; but no one likes to go out to work if he can work for himself. For every day that you go out to work you lose two days on your own place.

13569. *By the Chairman:* You say the men do not like to work for others if they can work on their own holdings? No one cares to work for others.

13570. But if by working for others they can earn money to pay for their homes, they would not object to that? No. I did that myself. Others have done it, too. But I improved my place at the same time.

13571. Would it be possible to get men to come out and work for somebody for a year and then settle down? I cannot say.

13572. *By Mr. Nielson:* Scandinavians who immigrate do not immigrate to work for others, but to get a home of their own? Yes, they like a home of their own. They come out here to do better for themselves.

13573. *By the Chairman:* Will you ask your friends who are present if there is anything they wish you to say on their behalf, as it would be difficult for us to examine them? [*After consultation with a number of other Finns who were present*] The consensus of opinion amongst the Finns settled here is that they could not do with a lesser area than 50 to 60 acres. If we cultivate 10 acres now, we want another 10 acres to follow it up in a few years' time. Ten acres is no good to a practical man.

13574. You think a man should have at least 50 or 60 acres? Yes; because he must give the ground a spell occasionally or else manure it. A 10-acre farm is no good to anyone.

ALEXANDER WILLIAM THYNS, Solicitor practising in Nambour, examined:

A. W. 13575. *By the Chairman:* You are a solicitor practising in Nambour? Yes.

Thynne. 13576. Are you interested in a cane farm? No.

7 June, 1906. 13577. *By Mr. Paget:* I believe you can give us some information with respect to the provisions of the leases under which Pacific Islanders hold land in this district? Yes.

13578. Is there any provision in the leases for compensation being given to them in the event of their being deported? In all the leases I have had to do with there is a provision to the effect that, if deportation is enforced, the owner of the land will compensate the "boys" for all improvements made by them on the land, and also for any standing crops.

13579. *By the Chairman:* Is there any provision as to how the compensation is to be settled? It is to be a fair and reasonable compensation.

13580. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is it to be settled by arbitration in case of dispute? Probably; but it is not specified in the leases.

13581. *By Mr. Paget:* Is it to be settled in accordance with the provisions of the Agricultural Holdings Act? No; it is necessary to make these leases fairly simple; you cannot make them too lengthy.

13582. What rent is generally paid? The usual royalty of 1s. a ton.

13583. No further rent? No; some of the leases contain a reservation of 1s. a year, but that is a mere formality.

13584. *By Mr. Nielson:* Were these leases all made with the approval of the Pacific Island Department, or was there any reference to the department before the "boys" took the leases? I understand that it is because the department cautioned them of the danger of being deported that it has got about amongst the "boys" that the leases will not prevent them being deported.

13585. When a "boy" was taking a lease, did he, or did anyone on his behalf, refer to the department before the "deal" was settled? Not to my knowledge. I have merely drawn the leases.

13586. *By the Chairman:* But it is through the action of the department that the islanders have been apprised of the possibility of danger? I understand that is so.

13587. *By Mr. Paget:* Is there any further information you would like to give us with reference to this aspect of the question? I think that is all, except that there are some leases in the district that do not contain that condition; and I think it is a case of a swindle if there are any such.

(Nerang.)

FRIDAY, 8 JUNE, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

ALEXANDER CRAN, Manager of Nerang Central Sugar Mill, examined:

A. Cran. 13588. *By the Chairman:* You are manager of the Nerang Central Sugar Mill? Yes.

8 June, 1906. 13589. And you have had many years' experience in the sugar industry? I have had twenty-six years' experience.

13590. How long have you been in this district? Two years.

13591. During that time what has been your experience with regard to the quality of labour that you have been employing? The very best. I have had no fault to find with it.

13592. Do you chiefly use local or casual labour? Chiefly local labour. Preference is given to local hands. A. Cran.
13593. Can you generally get good men amongst the casual labour? Yes.
13594. How far are you from a public-house? Four miles. We are equidistant from Southport and Nerang. 8 June, 1906.
13595. We have been told that intemperance is the principal reason for labour being unreliable? Intemperance is unknown here.
13596. By Mr. Nielson: You have a surplus amount of labour in this district? Yes; there is a slight surplus. I could get more men if I required them.
13597. By Mr. Paget: But there is not a great number of men out of employment here? No. There are not many looking for work, as it is well known that local hands get the preference.
13598. Are the farmers here mostly white-labour growers? They are all registered this year without exception. The last two years out of five gangs there was one gang of Indians; but there were only three black growers out of about thirty.
13599. You have about thirty growers for the mill? Yes.
13600. By the Chairman: Then I suppose the Indians have disappeared? Disappeared absolutely.
13601. You probably know the wages that are paid in the district? I do not; because the growers are mostly small farmers, who do all their own work. The areas grown vary from 5 to 40 acres.
13602. What is your opinion of a system of settling labourers on the land, so that they may make homes for themselves and be able to place their labour at the disposal of the farmers in the district? That is the aim here; so that they may be able to work at the mill in the off season.
13603. What is the smallest area of good land that would be useful to a man under those circumstances? I should say 10 or 50 acres down here.
13604. But, applying such a scheme to other parts of the State where good land is scarce close to the cane farms, what would be the smallest area a man would be able to get along with? I do not know that I can express an opinion on that. I only feel disposed to state facts.
13605. By Mr. Nielson: Are the areas under cane increasing in this district? They are increasing rapidly.
13606. By Mr. Paget: You have no coloured cane suppliers? None whatever, but I may have next year. There is only one kanaka in the whole district, and he is a freeholder. He has been here for thirty years, and he is starting to grow a little cane for the mill, but it will only be 5 or 6 acres.
13607. You have no islanders settled on leaseholds? No.
13608. By the Chairman: Then the deportation of the islanders will not affect this district at all? No.
13609. The men whom you employ have farms of their own, and they sometimes work for you? I cannot say that. They cut firewood for the mill and do odd jobs in Southport.
13610. They do not rely altogether on their own homesteads for a living? No.
13611. Do you think it would be practicable to settle white workers on small areas and employ them during the harvesting season? Yes, it would be an excellent idea.
13612. We have been told that they would want to work on their own land when they were wanted by the cane farmers? They might want to work on their own land when I wanted them.
13613. Could not that be got over by the neighbours whose crops wanted harvesting at the same time forming themselves into gangs? Yes.
13614. But supposing the men did not grow cane, would it be advisable to settle a man on 40 acres and have a little cultivation to help out his expenses? That system practically obtains now. Some of the men have small holdings of their own on which they work during the slack season.
13615. Then the system is sound? Absolutely sound. I am strongly in favour of such a system. My early experience at Yengarie was in that direction. Most of the farmers were Germans and Dutch, who took up homesteads and worked there during the slack season and in the mill during the crushing season. They dairied and grew a little produce.
13616. And if you wanted them for a week or two at any time, you could always get them? Yes.
13617. They made their interests subservient to yours, to a certain extent, for the sake of the ready money they got? Yes.
13618. By Mr. Paget: After this year the conditions will be very much in favour of such a system, especially as some thousands more white men will be wanted? That is so.
13619. By the Chairman: When you were at Yengarie, what sized farms had those men? Most of them had 160-acre homesteads.
13620. Unfortunately, we have not large areas of Crown lands to come and go on? Quite so.
13621. And the areas would have to be as small as would be compatible with success? Yes.
13622. Is there anything else you can help us with? Not that I know of.

HUBERT JAMES COOPER, Clerk to the Nerang Shire Council, and a Member of the Firm of Cooper Brothers, examined:

13623. By the Chairman: I understand you have had many years' experience in this district? My whole life has been spent in it. H. J. Cooper.
13624. Are you a farmer now? No, I am not farming at the present time. I am clerk to the Nerang Shire Council. 8 June, 1906.
13625. What is the area of the farms about here? About 40 or 50 acres. They might average a bit more than that, but I do not think they have more than 50 acres available for sugar.
13626. I suppose your business takes you a good deal about the district? Not a great deal. I do not inspect the roads or anything of that sort, but only do the clerical work.
13627. Are you in a position to tell us whether a large number of men come over here from New South Wales looking for work? At the present time there is a large number. There are some selecting land down at Tallebudgera.
13628. I do not mean selectors, but men who are looking for work? There are plenty of men walking the roads; but whether they are looking for work or not I could not say. They are continually camping within the town area. I suppose there is an average of one or two every day.
13629. Are they walking this way? They are going backwards and forwards. Some are going one way and some another. I fancy some of them are not looking for work, but are just putting in time.

H. J. Cooper. Then some men from New South Wales have come here to take up land. I may say that the City Bank of Sydney cut up some land on Currumbin Creek. There were thirty-six holdings altogether, and they were all sold but two. There is no means of getting on to these holdings though if they grow cane.

8 June, 1906. 13630. How far from the railway is it? The furthest-off farm would be 7 or 8 miles, but some of them are much nearer than that.

13631. What areas were they? They were from 100 to 160 acres each. There were 10,000 acres cut up altogether, and all the farms were sold but two.

13632. What wages are paid to men for chipping? 5s. a day.

13633. *By Mr. Paget*: And find themselves? I do not know about that, as I have not been farming lately, and I cannot speak with any certainty. There are one or two men knocking about, and I know they would not do chipping for less than 5s. a day. The land that was cut up on Currumbin Creek is certainly good sugar land, if there were only some means of getting on to it.

13634. *By the Chairman*: Is it long since it was sold? They started to sell some of it twelve months ago, and they have been selling it off until now. They have now disposed of the whole estate, with the exception of the two lots I spoke about, and they are not very suitable. They are the worst lots in the estate.

(Beenleigh.)

TUESDAY, 12 JUNE, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (*Chairman*) | MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

HEINRICH PHILIP OPPENHEIM, Cane Farmer, examined?

H. P. 13635. *By the Chairman*: Where is your farm? On the Logan River.
Oppenheim.

13636. How long have you lived in this district? About forty years—I came here in 1869.

13637. Are you growing cane? Yes. I have been growing cane all the time.

13638. How many acres have you now? I own 4 acres myself. I really gave up my farm altogether.

13639. You know the circumstances of the district so far as labour is concerned? Yes.

13640. Are there plenty of men here to do the work there is to do? We have always had plenty of men up till now.

13641. Are they good sort of men? Yes. You know we have a number of farmers' boys here, and they are the best fellows.

13642. Do the farmers ever employ the men who are knocking about looking for work—that is, the swagmen? Yes; we have employed some of them.

13643. How did they turn out? They did not stop very long. When they got a few pounds they left. Sometimes they would come home at dinner-time and ask for their money.

13644. Were they good men when they were working? Some of them.

13645. Were they sober men? Not all of them.

13646. Are there plenty of farmers' boys growing up in this district? No; they are all going away to Bundaberg.

13647. What for? To cut cane in the canefields.

13648. They like that sort of work? Yes.

13649. They make good money there? I suppose so.

13650. Do you think any of those young men would want to go away and marry and settle down on new land? They would in time.

13651. Would they go up to the far North and grow cane up there if they could get land? Yes. There are a lot of them up the North Coast line taking up land now.

13652. There is always plenty of labour here? I am a shareholder in the sugar mill here, and we can always get plenty of men here to do the work.

13653. *By Mr. Paget*: You say that the farmers occasionally employ swagmen; what wages do you pay in this district for field work? We generally pay £1 a week for field work, and give them their dinner. The men have to find the rest of their meals themselves.

13654. *By the Chairman*: You pay £1 a week and give one meal a day? Yes.

13655. *By Mr. Paget*: What wages do you pay during the crushing season? For the last two years we have paid 25s. a week during the crushing and let the men find themselves.

13656. Have you any particular wages for canecutting and loading? No; it is about the same rate all through.

ALEXANDER CRAN, Manager of Nerang Central Sugar Mill, further examined:

A. Cran. 13657. *By the Chairman*: Do you wish to give any further evidence? No; but Mr. Kleinschmidt was unfortunately unable to be present, and he asked me to give some information to the Commission with regard to the wages he is paying. He pays his ordinary workmen 28s. to 30s. a week, and they find themselves. His engine-drivers get 10s. a day.

13658. *By Mr. Paget*: Are those wages paid for mill work? Yes; during the crushing season. The sugar-boilers get from 10s. to 11s. 6d. a day, and the firemen 6s. 6d. to 7s. a day. The men work ten hours a day and find themselves. Preference for employment is given to local men, and his employees are composed of local men.

13659. *By the Chairman*: A lot of the farmers' sons are growing up, and there is no room for them to settle down? No.

13660. Do you think if the facilities for settlement in the far North, say in the Atherton Scrub, were properly brought before these young fellows, they would be inclined to go up there? Yes.

13661. In Mackay there are rich lands at Silent Grove—would the young fellows be willing to go there? Yes. I know two cases in my own district where the sons are growing up and the land their fathers have is not sufficient to keep the whole lot of them. Those young fellows are trying to break away and settle on the land somewhere, but they do not know where to go.

A. Cran.

12 June, 1906.

13662. If these Atherton and Silent Grove lands were brought before them, would they go there? Yes, A. Cran.
they would. Of course, their fathers, with the fatherly instinct, do not want the boys to go away from home, but they are only standing in the way of the boys. 12 June, 1906.
13663. Would these boys be likely to work on some of the cane-fields during the crushing season to help them along? They would.

ALEXANDER ROACH, Pacific Islander, examined:

[Mr. Cran acted as interpreter.]

13664. *By the Chairman:* What island do you come from? Santo. A. Roach.
13665. How long have you been in Queensland? Seventeen years. 12 June, 1906.
13666. Are you married? Yes.
13667. White woman? Yes.
13668. English woman? No; German woman born in Queensland.
13669. How many children? Six children—two boys and four girls.
13670. Do the children go to school? Three of them go to school.
13671. *By Mr. Paget:* Were you married in church? Yes; Church of England.
13672. *By the Chairman:* Do you pay rent for the land you have got? Yes.
13673. What do you grow? Nothing.
13674. Is it scrub land? No; I live right in Beenleigh.
13675. How do you live? I cut firewood.
13676. Do you go to the plantations? No; not now.
13677. Do you want to go back home? No.
13678. Do you want to stop here? Yes.
13679. Have you a ticket? Yes.
13680. *By Mr. Nielson:* Were you in Queensland before you came seventeen years ago? No.
13681. Then you cannot have an exemption ticket? No.
13682. You got a brother? Yes.
13683. What is his name? Peter Roach.
13684. How long has he been here? Twenty years.
13685. Where does he stop now? Pimpama Island.
13686. Has he got a ticket? No.
13687. Is he married? Yes.
13688. To a white woman? Yes; to a German woman.
13689. *By the Chairman:* Has he any children? No.
13690. Has he got a farm at Pimpama Island? Yes.
13691. Did he buy it, or does he only lease it? He leases it.
13692. How much rent does he pay? I do not know.
13693. *By the Chairman:* What does he grow? Sugar-cane, corn, and all that.
13694. Are there many "boys" living about here? There are a good few.
13695. *By Mr. Nielson:* About how many altogether? I could not tell you because they are not all here.
13696. Are there more than 100 in the district? I have no idea.
13697. *By Mr. Paget:* Are they Solomon Islanders or New Hebrides "boys"? They belong to all islands. Some belong to Malaya and some to Tanna and other islands.

CHARLIE SARAKWA, Pacific Islander, examined:

12998. *By Mr. Nielson:* What island do you belong to? Santo. C. Sarakwa.
12999. How many years have you been in Queensland? Sixteen years. 12 June, 1906.
13000. Where did you come to first time? Maryborough.
13001. What name master? Mr. Hall, at Aurora, near Tiara.
13002. Are you married? No.
13003. Do you want to go home? No.
13004. *By the Chairman:* You got money longa savings bank? Little bit.
13005. You got a house here? Yes.
13006. How much did you pay for it? £50.
13007. *By Mr. Nielson:* Whose name longa paper for your house—your name? No; Mr. Hyde's.
13008. *By the Chairman:* What do you work at? I no work.
13009. *By Mr. Nielson:* You grow something and sell it? Yes.

CHARLIE COLOMBI, Pacific Islander, examined:

13710. *By Mr. Nielson:* What island do you belong to? Api. C. Colombi.
13711. How long have you been in Queensland? Twenty years. 12 June, 1906.
13712. Where you come first time? Southport—to Mr. Muir, at Benowa.
13713. What name ship? "Chance."
13714. You married? No.
13715. You got ground? No.
13716. Where you work? I walk about.
13717. You work longa agreement? Sometimes.
13718. You want to go home? No.
13719. *By the Chairman:* You got any money in the bank? Little bit.

PETER KRUMAN, Pacific Islander, examined:

13720. *By Mr. Nielson:* What island do you belong to? Buka Buka. P. Kruman.
13721. How many years have you been in Queensland? Over twenty years. 12 June, 1906.
13722. You married? No.
13723. You got ground? No.

P. Kruman. 13724. Where you work? No work.

13725. You work sometimes? Sometimes I work, but I not working now.

12 June, 1906. 13726. Where you stop? Longa another "boy."

13727. You want to go home? No.

13728. Do you not want to go home any more? Sometime if I want to go home I go home.

13729. Where did you land when you came to Queensland first? Bundaberg.

13730. What name ship you come? "Forest King."

13731. What name your first master? Mr. Archer.

13732. You got little bit money longa bank? No money.

13733. Where you got him? Spend him all.

13734. You get plenty tucker where you stop? Sometimes plenty tucker.

13735. You get him longa other "boy," and when you get money you pay him? No; every one of us get rations for ourselves.

13736. You got plenty tucker now? Yes.

NUMAKATA, Pacific Islander, examined:

Numakata. 13737. *By Mr. Nielson*: What island do you belong to? Torres.

13738. How many years you stop in Queensland? Twenty-three years.

12 June, 1906. 13739. What name ship? "Chance."

13740. What name master when you come first time? Davey and Gooding.

13741. You married? No; no money to get married on.

13742. You work now? No.

13743. Where you get tucker? I have friends here.

13744. You got money longa bank? Yes.

13745. Suppose ship come, you want to go home? If you don't like me stop, I have to go home; if you don't want me to go away, I stop.

13746. Suppose ship stop Queensland and Government ask you if you like to go home, what you say? I say I like to go home.

JOHN MOLU, Pacific Islander, examined:

J. Molu. 13747. *By Mr. Nielson*: What island you belong to? Api.

13748. How long you been in Queensland? Twenty-three years.

12 June, 1906. 13749. What ship? "Meg Merrilees."

13750. Where were you first employed? At Witty's.

13751. Are you married? No.

13752. Where do you work? I no work.

13753. How long you no work? Two years no work.

13754. Where you get 'em tucker? I buy it.

13755. You got some money yet? Yes, little bit.

13756. *By Mr. Paget*: Have you got a house? Yes; I rent house.

13757. You grow something and sell 'em? Yes.

13758. You no want to go home? No.

HENRY PRIMROSE, Sergeant of Police stationed at Beenleigh, examined:

H. Primrose. 13759. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you give the Commission any evidence with regard to the men passing through this township? Yes; I am officer in charge of the issue of relief here.

12 June, 1906. 13760. Are you in charge of the Labour Bureau, too? I will not say that. I was recently advised that I was in charge of the Labour Bureau, but I was doubtful about it until we had a little correspondence the other day. At any rate, I have been issuing rations on behalf of the department since July, 1901. In that month sixteen men passed through the books as having received rations.

13761. *By Mr. Nielson*: Give us the total for the last twelve months? In June, 1905, rations were issued to 42 men; in July, to 25; August, 22; September, 20; October, 7; November, 17; December, 19; January (1906), 22; February, 15; March, 25; April, 18; May, 22; making a total for the last twelve months of 254 men. Most of the men who are knocking about looking for work are men who, when they get it, will not keep it.

13762. *By Mr. Paget*: For what reason? I do not know. In several instances I have taken the trouble myself to ride 8 or 9 miles for men. On one occasion I got situations for some men after riding that distance for them, and, although I told them what place to go to, they never went near it. Last crushing season I got four men in the bush, and I got them work at Krebs's Rosevale mill. Those men were engaged to carry cane from where it was carted to the rollers. It came on to rain, and the proprietor of the mill told them to go and bag the sugar. They refused to do that, saying that they agreed to carry sugar-cane and they would not do any other work.

13763. The employer did not want to knock them off owing to the rain, but found them something else to do in the mill? Yes; but they refused to do it. They summoned him under the Masters and Servants Act for wages, and his mill was stopped for two days while he brought men here to prove his case.

13764. Generally speaking, the class of labour that comes through this district is not such as would prove of very great value? No. I have taken great notice of the labour here, and that is my opinion with regard to the majority; but, of course, there are exceptions.

13765. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is there any scarcity of labour in this district? I do not know of any.

13766. How long have you been here? I have been here for five years? I have interested myself in the working men and tried to do all I possibly could to try to get situations for them.

13767. *By Mr. Paget*: You are officer in charge of the Labour Bureau? No. I issue the relief, and the two departments are under distinct heads.

13768. Is there a branch of the bureau in Beenleigh? Yes; but the clerk of petty sessions is in charge of it. The police magistrate acts as clerk of petty sessions here. I refused to act as officer in charge of the Labour Bureau the other day without being advised by my department whether I was in charge of that department or not. It is still undecided whether I am acting for the Labour Bureau or not.

(Erisbane II.)

WEDNESDAY, 13 JUNE, 1906.

PRESENT:

Mr. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman) | Mr. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

Mr. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

EDWARD WILLIAM KNOX, General Manager of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, examined:

13769. *By the Chairman:* What is your official position in the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? I E.W. Knox.
 am the general manager of the company. I have a statement prepared, as I thought that would be the
 easiest way of giving my evidence.

13770. Thank you—Will you just read it?

13 June, 1906

Employment of White and Coloured Labour at the Company's Australian Mills.

Since 1880 I have been manager of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company; before that date I was for ten years in charge of the company's mills in New South Wales.

I have never been in tropical Queensland, though frequently in the tropics elsewhere, but the whole of the work in connection with the opening of the Northern plantations, the erection and running of the mills, and the recent sales of the cultivation land to farmers have been done since my appointment as manager. Moreover, all questions relating to the pay or well-being of the men employed at any of our factories have always been dealt with by myself individually, the responsibility for any changes being in the first instance on me.

From the opening of the New South Wales mills in 1870, European labour only has been employed by us in that State both in the mill and in the cutting of the cane, a work which has, from the first, been almost entirely in our hands. The farmers who grew the cane realised that this course was the best, and the work has been carried out practically without friction between any of the three parties concerned, almost the only change of importance made in the thirty-six years in the working of the men being the reduction in the number in each gang.

Cane has never been grown by us on the Clarence, and to a very small extent only on the Richmond and Tweed; but all the land we owned on these rivers has now been sold.

In Queensland other conditions have prevailed hitherto, but the tendency is towards the adoption of a system similar to that in New South Wales. We have six mills—Childers, near Bundaberg; Homebush, at Mackay; Victoria, on the Herbert; Macknade, on the Herbert; Goondi, on the Johnstone; Hambledon, at Cairns; all except the first being in the tropics.

At Childers, since it was opened, we have employed only Europeans in the mill, and until 1904 the cutting of the cane was always done by the individual growers. In that year we undertook the control of gangs for many of the farmers who had qualified for the bonus, and the result has been so satisfactory to the growers that a larger area is this season to be taken off in this way. New South Wales conditions of employment have been adhered to as far as possible, but the schedules of prices vary considerably, as the Southern cane has to be loaded into punts, while the other is conveyed on tramways.

At the Mackay mill we have also for very many years—if not even from the opening of the factory—practically worked the place with European labour, but at the more Northern mills the staff has been a mixed one. The principal posts have always been filled by whites, and certain departments have generally been fully manned by them, but Japanese, Chinese, Malays, and Hindoos, have at the same time been employed. Of late years kanakas have, of course, been excluded by law.

For the various mill staffs the same rates of wages are maintained as nearly as possible in the various departments, and the managers cannot make any changes in regard thereto, or engage anyone at less than the standard scale, without reference to Sydney.

So far no cutting has been done by us at any of the mills in the tropics, but arrangements are now being made to undertake this work on behalf of the farmers who are working their farms with white labour. The scale of payment will be somewhat higher than in New South Wales, on account of the greater heat and the cost of the passages to the North.

Hitherto it has been our practice to keep a certain number of kanakas at all the mills in the tropics who could be used in taking off the crops, but the agreements of the last of these men expire in a few months, and the farmers will then be thrown on their own resources.

The extent to which we have depended on coloured labour of late in the manufacture may be gathered from the fact that at our Australian mills (in New South Wales and Queensland) we paid in 1905 £80,900 for European labour—wages and rations—and the cost of the coloured labour was £12,200, such sums including the maintenance charges, but not the salaries of the staff.

These figures go to show that inside the mills we may expect, without serious difficulty even as far north as Cairns, to carry on the work throughout the season with white labour, and there has never been in my mind any doubt on this point, though, for the stations where the work is very hot or very heavy, and the conditions in these respects cannot be much improved, I would prefer to see coloured men employed. I am convinced, however, that white labourers must be largely migratory and go South, or at any rate to the tableland, between the end of the season and April, and that the settlement of men and women of British descent under conditions that should prevail in tropical life will be impossible on the Northern coast, where the earnings of the head of the family are mainly those obtainable during the crushing season.

This now generally extends over six months—from June to Christmas. When cane is bought by sweetness, the growers object to early cutting, so approval could not be expected for a proposal to start in May instead of June, and on the other hand the heat in November and December and the effect this will have on the cutting gangs will be urged as a reason for stopping work long before Christmas. The cane is at its best in October and November, and in December is better than in June and July, and shortening the season renders necessary a larger margin of profit for the manufacturers, whose plant is idle for a longer time, so any change in the conditions heretofore existing will operate to the disadvantage of the growers.

E. W. Knox.

13 June, 1906.

As to the prospects of the growers in regard to the cultivation and cutting of the cane with white labour, I would prefer not to make any statement. Their interest in the business is—so far as the irrecoverable loss is concerned, if it be destroyed—probably equal to ours; and, as we can work the mills with white men if necessary, I feel that the right to speak about the cultivation is with them, and not with myself.

I should, however, state that, since the abolition of coloured labour was decided on, we have not been willing to increase the amount of capital invested in the factories in the North of Queensland, though we have, in the same time, added considerably to the producing capacity of those in 1891.

So far as I am aware, New South Wales and Spain are the only countries where sugar-cane has been grown for any length of time without coloured labour, and in no place inside the tropics has an experiment in this direction even been seriously made, except in the Sandwich Islands, where a number of Europeans have at various times been introduced, the results being, as stated by the Governor in his report for 1904, in the following terms:—

So far as the Europeans and Americans are concerned, it has, with one exception, been found that they were unfitted for tropical field work; they could not and would not perform it, and never for long laboured as field hands. The one exception noted is that of the Portuguese from Madeira and the Azores, who showed themselves capable of performing good field work. These people show no disposition now to come to the islands. Of the Portuguese who originally came to Hawaii as assisted immigrants, those who did not go to the mainland have so prospered that they do not engage to any large extent as plantation labourers.

13771. *By Mr. Nielson*: Your company purchase cane on the analysis basis. Yes.

13772. Does the same standard of analysis obtain throughout Queensland? Yes.

13773. Your company have been selling land on terms to farmers for some years? Yes.

13774. Can you give us information as to the average prices of land in the various districts of Queensland? I can give you information as to the areas we have sold, but I do not think I have any information as to the average price that has been realised for the land we have sold. We have sold altogether 39,000 acres, and we have 1,500 acres under lease at the present time.

13775. Is that land leased with the right of purchase? No. The area that we have sold comprises almost the whole of our cultivated land. We have, in addition, considerable areas of land on our hands, but it is nearly all land that is not available for cultivation.

13776. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you say whether the whole of the lands that have been sold to the farmers have been paid for? 15,000 acres have been paid for in full, and 24,000 acres in part.

13777. *By Mr. Nielson*: I understand that the majority of your purchasing agreements mature next year? Most of the balances are due at the end of this year, and we have sold a very considerable area within the last two years which will not be paid for for some time yet. At Childers the purchase of a very small portion has yet been completed.

13778. Can you state generally whether the price of land, say at Geraldton, Cairns, and other Northern districts, has gone up within the last two or three years? I could not say. We made nearly all our contracts for sale before the imposition of the federal tariff.

13779. We were told at Geraldton that some land in the Goondi Estate was sold for as much as £23 per acre, with £12 per acre additional as the value of the ratoons then on the land? One farm consisting of very good land was sold on those terms at Alligator Point.

13780. Can you tell me the average price at which land has been acquired at Goondi, without taking into consideration the value of the ratoons? I should say about £7 an acre. So far as my memory serves me, our original prices were about £7 an acre. They ran from £3 to £15 an acre, cleared and uncleared. The land that was sold for £23 an acre was a part of our land around the mill in a very favourable position. It is rich alluvial land. We had about nine farms containing about 100 acres—all good land. We put those nine farms up for sale last year, and they went from £9 to £23 an acre, and the first farm that was sold was the one which brought £23 an acre.

13781. *By the Chairman*: What was the area of the £23 farm? Seventy acres of cane land.

13782. *By Mr. Nielson*: In the Cairns district—at Mulgrave—I understand the price of your land has been from £8 to £16 per acre? It is Hambleton you mean. The highest is nothing near £16.

13783. I was speaking of cleared land? I would not be prepared to say anything for certain from memory, but I think the price would be more like £8 per acre.

13784. We were told that in the Ingham district the value of land has gone up recently; can you tell us to what extent? It has not gone up in the case of our land. I cannot speak about the land of outsiders. We are selling our land for the same price as we were seven or eight years ago. If anything, I should say it is now somewhat cheaper.

13785. *By Mr. Paget*: Your company sold a considerable area of land at Homebush, near Mackay? Yes.

13786. Can you give us any information as to the price you got for that land? So far as I remember, it was £5 an acre for land under the plough.

13787. After it had been cleared? Yes.

13788. Would you have any objection to say what price your company gave for that land? I think we gave £3 or £4 an acre for it in the bush—in the rough.

13789. Was not a portion of that estate bought by your company for £10 per acre in the bush? I do not remember, as it was twenty-four years ago.

13790. When selling these blocks of land to the farmers, is it your company's practice to make the farmer advances for the purpose of growing his crop? Yes.

13791. Those advances, I presume, are repaid out of the crop? Yes.

13792. As the various crops come in? Yes.

13793. Is any reduction made from the money due to the farmers for the payment of their land year by year? Yes; so much per ton.

13794. That is how the lands are paid for—out of the crop? Yes.

13795. You say in your statement that so far no cutting has been done by the company at any of the mills in the tropics—Has it not been the company's practice hitherto at the Homebush mill, in the Mackay

district, to get gangs for the farmers, although they were not actually engaged at the mill? We have not had any gangs under our supervision. We have not worked them as we have worked the gangs in New South Wales and at Childers.

E. W. Knox.

13 June, 1906.

13796. The company have been assisting to get the gangs together for the farmers? We have practically run white gangs for the last seven or eight years. They have been recruited and organised by us.

13797. What I wished to find out was if the gangs had not been engaged by your company? They may have been engaged by our officers, but they were not in the service of the company.

13798. They were engaged by your officers so as to expedite the work for the farmers? Yes.

13799. By Mr. Nielson: I observed recently in the Press where your company had advertised for men in Sydney, and I saw where a very large surplus of men had applied—Can you tell us really what took place? The first day I think there were between 700 and 1,000 men present, but they thinned off afterwards. At any rate we had no particular difficulty in engaging 200 or so.

13800. Can you give me your idea as to the class of men who applied for work? They were fair men, but not as good as the average New South Wales cane-cutting men.

13801. You refer to the Northern rivers cane-cutting men? Yes.

13802. Were they city men, or bushmen, or agricultural labourers, or what? I cannot say.

13803. By Mr. Paget: This was in response to an advertisement in the Sydney Press? Yes. We also engaged some here, but the number who applied here were very limited. We engaged thirty in Brisbane, and some 200 or more in Sydney.

13804. Do you conclude from the number who applied in Sydney that there are a large number of men available for remunerative employment? I think there are always men available for remunerative employment.

13805. What class of men? Cane-cutting work is looked on in New South Wales as being well-paid-for work, and therefore men came round to see if they could get it. The cutters in New South Wales make very good wages, but they are very good men.

13806. By the Chairman: You have never found it necessary to go to Victoria for labour? No.

13807. By Mr. Paget: I suppose it does not necessarily follow that all these men who applied to you were out of work, but that they simply applied because they saw a chance of getting better wages? I cannot say if they were out of work or not; but, even so, 1,000 men out of work in a city with a population of 500,000 is not a large number. There is always a large floating population in Sydney of men ready to spend their money and to take an engagement anywhere, but this is the first time for probably twenty-five years that we have ever engaged any number of men in Sydney for service at any of our mills. The men always find their own way to the New South Wales and Queensland mills without our having to seek them either here or in Sydney.

13808. By the Chairman: Do you pay the passages of these men up to the Northern mills? We pay them. The cost is pretty considerable, and a man who is looking for an engagement, as a rule, has not £4 or £5 in his pocket.

13809. Do they refund the money to you out of their wages? No.

13810. You are getting a rebate of 25 per cent. in the fares from the shipping companies? There is a rebate, but I do not know what it is.

13811. In the North, in the case of the cutting gangs which your company organised, the passage money is said to be deducted at the rate of so much per ton from the payments to each farmer? No; we are paying the passages up.

13812. Yes; for the mill hands? For years we have not engaged any mill-hands anywhere except at the mill.

13813. We got it in evidence that 2s. 6d. a ton was deducted from the price of cane on account of the passage money of the cane-cutters who were sent up by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company for the farmers? Our arrangement with the farmers is that they pay the cost of cutting, and in that cost is included the cost of the passages up; but the men get their passages paid.

13814. But they are charged to the farmers? Yes. Under the agreement the farmer has to deliver the cane.

13815. You simply facilitate his carrying out his agreement by putting the labour on the ground? Yes.

13816. By Mr. Nielson: You say in your statement that you can work the mills in the North with white labour if necessary? Yes.

13817. Do you feel disposed to give us any opinion as to the cultivation work in the North? I have doubts as to whether I ought to. You have had plenty of opportunities of getting information from the farmers.

13818. I would like if you would explain the basis of the agreement which your company has put before the farmers to supersede the agreement which expires at the end of this year? What do you mean by the basis?

13819. You are offering a bonus, in addition to the analysis basis of payment? The only bonus we offered was that we said that, if the farmers wished, the agreement could begin in 1906 instead of in 1907, and we would pay for 1906 an amount equivalent to the bonus that will be given by the Federal Government in 1907.

13820. That would represent a deferred payment on the value of the cane? No; there is no deferred payment about it. Practically, what we said was: "If you like to make your agreement run from 1906 instead of from 1907, we will see that you get the same price for your cane in 1906 as you will in 1907 under the altered Excise regulations."

13821. What was the object of increasing the price for this year, when you had an agreement already in existence? There was no object except to give the farmers better terms than they have now.

13822. There must surely have been some object in view when you have an agreement in existence till the end of this year—You say you are not altering your basis of payment, and yet you offer to pay an increased price for this year, on condition of obtaining an extension of the agreement as it were? I never said that we were not altering our basis of payment. As a matter of fact, we propose to give the farmers 1s. 4d. per ton from 1907 more than they get under the existing agreement.

13823. I have heard doubts expressed in the North as to the ability of certain growers to employ white labour on account of the cost, the complaint being that they do not get a sufficiently good price from the company for their cane; and a comparison was drawn in the Cairns district between the prices given for cane by the Hambleton mill and the Mulgrave Central Mill—I do not want to take the Mulgrave mill as

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a standard by any means; but I want to point out that the Mulgrave mill paid an average of 20s. 5d. per ton for cane last year, whereas the Hambledon mill, just alongside, paid an average of 13s. 7d. a ton, and I am informed that the average density of the cane was 8 better at Hambledon than at the Mulgrave mill—How do you account for the difference in the prices paid by the two adjoining mills? The Mulgrave mill was able to pay a much higher price than they could before, because they received for the sugar that they made last year a much higher price than the average price on which our original offer was based. During the currency of the Federal tariff there have been two very bad years, so far as the sugar market is concerned—1901 and 1902—and two good years—1904 and 1905. When we made the offer to the farmers in 1901 it was regarded throughout Queensland as a very reasonable and fair offer. We took the risk of the market. We conceded two bad years, so the profit from the two good years belongs to us and not to the farmers.

13824. I am not arguing as to whom it belongs to—I only want to know how the difference in the prices paid by the two mills is accounted for? The difference is accounted for by the fact that the Mulgrave mill got more for their sugar and were able to pay more for their cane.

13825. Then, if the Colonial Sugar Refining Company had not had a contract, they would necessarily have paid a higher price also? If the market price of sugar was going to remain for years at what it was in 1905, of course we could pay more for the cane; but nobody who knows anything about the market expects that it will.

13826. *By Mr. Paget:* According to the price of sugar in 1901, the price your company paid for cane was relatively higher than it should have been? It was relatively high in 1901 and 1902, and relatively low in 1904 and 1905.

13827. Because you entered into a contract for a series of years? Yes; and because nobody foresaw in 1901 the extraordinarily high level prices would reach in 1904 and 1905, in consequence of the drought in Europe ruining the beet crop.

13828. *By Mr. Nielson:* Is the new agreement you are asking farmers in the North to sign based on the same scale of prices as the existing agreement? No; we are offering 1s. 4d. a ton more, and, in addition to that, we are offering them the right to have the scale fluctuating with the price of sugar, if they so desire.

13829. *By Mr. Paget:* I presume that in making this offer to the farmers your company have taken into consideration the fact that there will be £1 a ton more excise to pay on sugar after this year? Yes.

13830. Did you not reduce the price of cane on that account? Yes, but we did not reduce it by the amount of the additional excise. That is how we come to be paying more.

13831. The company are prepared to pay 1s. 4d. a ton more than they should really pay under the increased excise, and the farmers will be paid the increased bounty which is payable after this year under the new Bounty Act? Yes.

13832. *By Mr. Nielson:* Then, with this extra excise duty of £1 a ton there will be a corresponding decrease in the price of cane? Yes.

13833. Amounting to 2s. 6d. a ton? It is 2s. 2d. at Childers, and 2s. 6d. in the North.

13834. Then you are really deducting 2s. 6d. a ton, less 1s. 4d.? Yes.

13835. *By Mr. Paget:* The white grower practically gets the 2s. 6d. a ton back in the shape of bounty? Yes. We raised the price of cane by 3s. a ton on the average in 1901.

13836. *By Mr. Nielson:* At your mills are the men paid by cheque or in cash? They are paid in cash, unless they specially ask for a cheque, and then there is no difficulty about getting one.

13837. *By the Chairman:* Would you be in favour of the Government Savings Bank authorities sending a receiving officer to your various mills on pay-day to receive such moneys as the men may then and there be willing to bank? We have no objection to that.

13838. Does it occur to you that it would tend to encourage habits of thrift if the men could put their money out of the way of temptation at once? That would be a desirable thing to do.

13839. Are your mills within a reasonable distance of savings banks? I am not sure about that. I think Homebush is the furthest away.

13840. *By Mr. Paget:* Homebush is 15 miles away? Yes.

13841. *By the Chairman:* Do you think that scheme would be practicable? Yes, if the Government like to do it.

13842. *By Mr. Nielson:* Your company would have no objection to giving the officer his meals while he was there? No, of course not.

13843. *By the Chairman:* The idea is to encourage the men to put the money away while they are in the humour, and then there is a certain amount of trouble for them to draw it from the savings bank; you catch my idea? Yes.

13844. *By Mr. Paget:* Your company has a system, has it not, by which its employees are guaranteed against accidents? We have two—the Benefit Society for all wage-earners to subscribe to, and the Provident Fund, which is for the permanent wage-earners and the staff.

13845. Would you have any objection to giving the Commission the particulars of these schemes? Under the Benefit Society each wage-earner pays 3d. a week and the company contributes a similar amount. In return for that the Society makes a payment during the sickness of any member, and also a payment on the death of any member. The Provident Fund provides for insurance and bonuses.

13846. That is to the staff officers? Yes. A poll was taken lately in connection with the Workers' Compensation Act recently introduced here, and 413 of our men voted in favour of our scheme as contrasted with the benefits given under the Workers' Compensation Act. Twelve only voted in favour of the Act.

13847. Will you not be able to continue your scheme under one of the provisions of the Act? We have made provision to contract out of the Act. It was for that purpose that the poll was taken. We have sent in the application, but we have not heard the result of it.

13848. One of the provisions of the Act gives you the right to apply for permission to contract out of the Act? Yes. We have similarly contracted out of the Acts in South Australia and New Zealand—the only other States where a similar Act is in force.

13849. That is in connection with the men employed in your refineries? Yes.

13850. *By Mr. Nielson:* You state that since federation you have not been willing to increase the amount of capital invested in your factories in the North of Queensland? Yes.

13851. Might I ask you if your company is prepared to dispose of its factories in North Queensland, as a result of federation and the legislation you refer to? The company has never sold any factory yet, and I do not think it is going to begin now. E. W. Knox.

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13852. *By Mr. Paget*: Can you give us, approximately, the area of cane that is crushed by your factories in Queensland? We have 35,000 acres under contract.

13853. Of that area, how much is crushed by the Childers mill? Nearly 7,000 acres.

13854. That would leave 28,000 acres in the tropics? Yes.

13855. You mention in your statement that you have undertaken in the last year or two the cutting of cane for a number of farmers at the Childers mill; would your company in future be inclined to extend that system to the tropics? I am quite sure, if the cane is to be cut by white labour in the tropics, that it will be cut better by us than by the individual farmers.

13856. The company will not object to engage men, and work them if the farmers so desire? To a large extent the farmers' interests and ours are the same. The farmer wants to get off his crop under the best conditions, and we want to get the crop off under the best conditions and in the most regular way.

13857. I ask this because your company has had a great number of years' experience in handling gangs of white labour? We can handle the gangs satisfactorily, but they will not be so easily handled in the North as they are in the South.

13858. *By Mr. Nielson*: For what reason? Different climates and different men. We have had two generations of men on the Clarence.

13859. *By Mr. Paget*: Do your officers on the Northern rivers of New South Wales anticipate any shortage in the labour supply during the current year owing to the numbers of men who are leaving there to harvest in North Queensland? So far as we have ascertained only a limited number have left there. We cannot be sure, because some may have gone up of their own accord, but we have not heard of many having left. A large proportion of the men we employ in New South Wales return season after season, and they would have advised us if they had been going away.

13860. *By Mr. Nielson*: Looking at the industry generally and the labour conditions, do you think the continuance of the bonus is indispensable to the industry? If you are going to work the industry with white labour the country has got to pay for it. That is as clear as daylight.

13861. You think the bonus is indispensable for the survival of the industry? Yes.

13862. *By Mr. Paget*: The bonus per ton of sugar offered after the end of this year will be equal to the protection that the New South Wales sugar-growers enjoyed before federation—namely, £3 per ton? The protection in New South Wales was £5 per ton.

13863. But it was afterwards reduced to £3? The tariff introduced in 1896 was £5 per ton on sugar and it was reduced to £3.

13864. The tariff introduced by Mr. Reid in New South Wales in 1896 said that the protection on sugar should automatically decrease by £1 a year, but when it reached £3 per ton they altered the tariff? Yes; they did not reduce the protection any further.

13865. So the bounty now offered for next year is equal to the protection which the New South Wales growers enjoyed? Well, there is £3 protection in the Commonwealth in addition to the bounty.

13866. I only say that the additional protection that the white-labour grower in Queensland will profit by after this year is the same as the white-labour grower of New South Wales practically had under the old conditions? Yes.

13867. *By the Chairman*: Do your Northern officers report any improvement in the class of labour that has been attracted to the North in the last twelve months or two years?—We heard that the class of labour that went up there at one time was very inferior indeed—Have you received reports that a better class has been seeking work up there? I have heard a great many complaints about the class of men up there, but I have not heard any statement that it had improved.

13868. Have you as many complaints now as formerly? I think that in regard to last season the quality of men was regarded as much about the same as the quality of the men employed in preceding seasons. Of course we have not yet engaged the men for this season. The matters brought out in the reports received are relative to the number of men passing through the cutting gangs in the course of the season.

13869. To maintain the gangs at their full strength? In New South Wales the men who begin the season generally finish it. Very few leave the gangs in New South Wales, but in Queensland the changes are very great. I have a report here comparing the returns received from our mills now cutting by white labour, and I am quite ready to put that at the disposal of the Commission. It gives a good deal of information and may be of service.

13870. It will be very useful to us I am sure? It was not prepared for publication, but I have no objection to its publication if you think fit. It was really prepared for the information of the managers at our mills. [Document tendered. *Vide Appendix XIV.*]

13871. There is one paragraph in this document that strikes me—You say "The greatest increases in this respect were at Macknade and Hambleton; while at Victoria (where all were local residents) and Homebush, there was a substantial reduction, which seems to indicate that the men at these two centres were more reliable."—The deduction would be that it is advantageous to get men settled on the land and give them an interest in it if you wish to get a more reliable class of labour; would you draw that deduction from it? Yes; if the men can make a reasonable living in the district.

13872. *By Mr. Nielson*: At Ingham a witness was asked with reference to the number of men who went through your Victoria mill books, and he ascribed a lot of the trouble to inferior accommodation, insufficient time for meals, and inferior food—He said that "Out of 135 white men engaged in the mill there were only three who were dismissed for drink during the season"; he further said that very few lost time through intemperance; that about 340 went through the books, and 40 per cent. of those who started finished the season—When he was asked why the others left, he said, "The large majority of them left on account of the number of hours they had to work and the food supplied to them"; and then the evidence went on:—"What were the hours? Day jobs were from 6 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with half an hour for breakfast in some cases, and in others no time at all?" What, no breakfast?

13873. I think he referred to firemen who had to eat their breakfast at their job? That is always the rule with firemen.

13874. He went on to say:—

They had to get their breakfast before they started in the morning.

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Was there any "crib" at 11 o'clock? No.

What time did they have for dinner? Centrifugal men got three-quarters of an hour, and the other men an hour. There was no intermission from dinner time till knocking-off time.

What about the food? Well, the food was not fit for a man to work on. They cannot work on the food supplied to them.

By Mr. Paget: You are saying this from your own knowledge? Yes; I worked for them and lived in the barracks with the men.

By the Chairman: At the Victoria mill? Yes; at the Victoria mill.

Was there a cook supplied? Yes.

What was the accommodation like? The accommodation was very poor.

Are you speaking of last year? I went there for work, and I was put—if I remember rightly—in a room of about 27 feet by 12 feet. In that room there were eight of us.

Were the bunks in tiers, or what? There were two tiers there. Along the wall was a small space for walking through.

Then he said that the Victoria mill had now started to put up new accommodation since the Shearers' and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act came into force? So far as I remember, there are no new barracks being built at Victoria. There is additional accommodation for additional workmen. If the statement had reference to the quality of the food supplied, it is a barefaced falsehood, because we have never supplied any food at any of our mills except the very best we could get. Of course, the cook may not be all that he might be, but that is one of the chances a man has to take. If there were two tiers of bunks in a room 27 feet by 12 feet, with only a narrow passage between, it would hold sixteen men instead of eight, so that there is a slight discrepancy there; there would be eight bunks on each side. I do not believe there ever were two tiers of bunks, because the men do not sleep in bunks—they sleep on stretchers.

13875. This evidence was given as a reason why men did not work right through the season? He may have had his reasons, but it is perfectly well known throughout Queensland and New South Wales that the men are well looked after at our mills. There may be individual cases of grievance—we cannot help that; but, so far as the food and the wages are concerned, I am sure there is no reason for complaint. Our system in the barracks has always been not to put more than four men in a room 13 feet by 12 feet. That would be four stretchers in a room, and no ceiling; so that there is no lack of ventilation. Of course, at Victoria there may have been a room without a central partition, and so there may have been eight men in a room, instead of two rooms with four men in each.

13876 *By the Chairman:* You are sure there are no bunks in tiers? I have never heard of any. As a matter of fact, the men sleep on stretchers.

13877. *By Mr. Paget:* In view of some of the evidence that was given, I took the opportunity of visiting Hambleton. I told Dr. Reed that I desired to see the quarters, and also the food that the men were being supplied with. He gave me an open order to all the officers on the plantation, instructing them to allow me to see everything that I desired. I visited not only the men's dining-room and the kitchen, but I also saw the men having their dinner, and the food seemed to be as good as anyone could desire. I visited the sleeping quarters, where there was provision made for only two men in a room; some of the rooms were exceedingly nice, the men having put up photographs, pictures, and so on. I visited the latrines and the bathroom accommodation, and to my mind everything was as comfortable as it was possible to be. None of it was new accommodation, but had been there for years? I can quite understand that.

13878. I visited the plantation to satisfy myself with regard to the provision made for the men, although I was already fully acquainted with the operations of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and their treatment of their employees—it is not the first time I have been on their plantations; but I thought it right that I should go and look for myself? I may say, in addition, that the only request we have had made to us under the Shearers' and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act was for some alterations to the quarters in which the coloured men slept. They were, in our opinion, very undesirable alterations; but there has not been, to my knowledge, the least objection taken with regard to the quarters occupied by European labourers.

13879. Do your company give men references or discharges when they leave? If they ask for them.

13880. But you have no system by which men get discharges at the end of the season? No.

13881. *By the Chairman:* Do you approve of such a system as that which is in force in the pastoral industry? We have never had any need of it; there are always plenty of men wanting to come to us. We give the preference to men who have been with us before.

13882. If two strangers came looking for work, and one had a reference while the other had not, would it not be of assistance to you? We would give the preference to the man with the reference, unless the other had been in employment longer somewhere else.

13883. *By Mr. Paget:* It might be a benefit to a future employer if a man had a discharge from your company? Yes; but we prefer to treat men entirely as free agents. If any of them think a reference will be an advantage to them, they get it.

JOHN MOODY COSTIN, Clerk in the Office of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, examined:

J. M. Costin.

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13884. *By the Chairman:* What are you? I am here in Dr. Roth's absence. He has resigned his appointment and left Queensland, and at present I am in charge of aboriginal matters. Before he went away he spoke to me about giving evidence before the Commission, and I have prepared a few things for him. As he had to leave before the Commission sat again in Brisbane, he instructed me to make a statement to you.

13885. Did he approve of the statement you are about to make? It was not completed before he left, so that he was not quite aware of all that I have got. It is in relation to the marriage of Pacific Islanders to aboriginal natives of Queensland. Under the Aborigines Protection Act, when a female aboriginal wishes to marry any other person than an aboriginal, the permission of the Chief Protector has to be obtained. I would like to quote a short extract from Dr. Roth's report for 1901, when this Act was passed—

Correspondence has passed between the Home Secretary, the Registrar-General, and myself relative to the marriage of native women (to others than aboriginals) upon which the amending Protection Bill of 1901 intends to place restrictions. It was extremely probable

that most, if not all, of these marriages were contracted to defeat the provisions of the J. M. Coet'n. 13 June, 1906. *Aboriginals Protection Act of 1897.* Cases occurred where men of bad character, upon being warned against harbouring or employing native females, deliberately went and married them, and so defied the protectors. I consider it a grave breach of the moral law that if an aboriginal woman is already married according to the recognised native rites and customs she should be allowed to marry any other person under British law—alien or European—without proper and full inquiry being made as to the possibility of any wrong being inflicted on her tribal husband. The following official report (dated 23-8-01) describes a condition of things on the Mossman, which, in my opinion, is directly due to the celebration of such marriages by apparently well-meaning clergy, etc., without full inquiries being previously made:—"There are nine aboriginal women at present living in this district with either kanakas or Chinamen, but most of them hold a marriage certificate, as they went through a form of marriage with the kanakas, in the English and Methodist Churches, somewhere about last January. All these girls go about working from place to place and earn their own living. Although married to one kanaka, they serve as prostitutes for many others." The evil is done, and I cannot remedy it. Personally, I have always exerted my influence in the direction of trying to put a stop to these mixed marriages, but cases repeatedly occur where they may be considered both expedient and justifiable. Among considerations which would have great weight with me in granting the permission are:—The general character and repute of both individuals, the number of years during which there has been cohabitation, and, where children have been born, the manner in which they have been reared, cared for, and schooled.

Under section 9, where the Chief Protector's permission has to be got, some sixty marriages have been celebrated between Pacific Islanders and aboriginal or half-caste women. In those cases, the custom has been for the Protector to make full inquiry as to the character of the men; and latterly, on account of the federal legislation, the Chief Protector has made it a condition of his permission being given that the islander, if he is deported to his island, shall take his wife with him, and in every case within my knowledge the man has consented.

18886. *By Mr. Paget:* But you have no knowledge as to whether the aboriginal women have gone home with their husbands? No.

18887. *By Mr. Nielson:* We have evidence that they have? I have not any. The Pacific Islander question at Thursday Island is somewhat interesting. Protector O'Brien, in a report to Dr. Roth, says:—

"There are a number of Pacific Islanders among the islands having island women as wives, in some cases lawfully married, in other cases married according to the local customs and observances, these latter marriages being generally celebrated in the island church by the Samoan missionary. These married men, in many cases, have numerous children, sometimes grandchildren, and some of them do honestly support their wives and families. Such men will generally be found living in galvanised iron houses, and at times living in comparative comfort. It has often occurred to me that the summary deportation of such men would be attended with serious difficulties—certainly with great hardship—and, I might add, inhumanity. And I feel sure that no department having the full facts before them would forcibly deport such men."

18888. *By the Chairman:* That report was received from the Protector of Pacific Islanders at Thursday Island? Yes; and he is Protector of Aboriginals also. The only other thing I would like to state with regard to the applications for permission to marry at Thursday Island is that we are attempting to restrict them. I refer to the applications from single Pacific Islanders.

18889. That is until you know what will be the fate of the women after marriage? Yes. It is a matter which seems to lead to a great deal of trouble. There are quarrels caused at Thursday Island owing to the interference of the Pacific Islanders with the native women and their attentions to them, and the male natives resent it.

18890. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you a list of the aboriginal women married to kanakas? I have not got the names here, but they total sixty in number.

18891. At Ayr a very intelligent half-caste native woman who was married to a kanaka gave evidence, and she spoke English very well.—Her name is Jemima and she is married to a kanaka named Ally Keena—He wants to go home and she wants to go with him—What course would you adopt before you permit that woman to go home with her husband? The Act does not allow us to let them go from Queensland, but as she is legally married to her husband then he is her protector.

18892. Have you any control over her then? No; we have no control over them after they are married. Her husband is her protector after marriage.

JOHN O'NEIL BRENNAN, Immigration Agent and Officer in Charge of Pacific Island Labour, further examined:

18893. *By the Chairman:* You produce a list of Pacific Islanders? I hand in (1) A list of Pacific Islanders in the Brisbane, Buderim, and Nambour districts, with summary showing the number who have been here for five years and under ten, 12; ten years and under fifteen, 33; fifteen years and under twenty, 38; twenty years and over, 51; also a list showing 691 "exempt islanders." You will notice a column headed "remarks," but the notes were originally only taken in the rough for my own information and will not be of any service to the Commission. Full particulars are shown in most cases, but in a few it was not possible to supply them without bringing the islanders to the Brisbane Office. I also hand in (2) a list of the married islanders in the districts referred to, with the number, ages, and sex of their children born in Queensland, and the nationality of their wives. Attached to this is a summary of the totals and the number of island women, and the aboriginal wives of the men. I hand in (3) a list of fifty-two islanders leasing land in the same districts with, in almost all cases, their full history and the particulars of their holdings, rent, and unexpired terms. In one or two of these cases the leases have run out and been renewed. One has been renewed a third time. The lessee is married to a white woman. I also hand in (4) a list of all islanders supposed to be in the State

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according to the registers of the department. As I anticipated, this is very misleading without explanation. Prior to the year 1884 there is no doubt that large numbers of islanders were returned home without being marked off in the register, and the late Mr. Woodward, who took charge in that year, I find, made an estimate of the island population shortly after he came, and that principally formed the basis for all annual reports. That it was a good estimate is shown by a comparison of my figures for the year 1900 with those of the census taken on the 31st March, 1901. Bringing my figures up to the latter date, by adding arrivals and subtracting departures and deaths, the totals stand—Census population, 9,327; Pacific Island Department's figures, 9,244—Difference, 83. Remembering that I keep no record of children, my figures must be approximately correct. I wanted to see how far our figures were absolutely correct, so I checked them with the last census taken.

13894. What do you make the approximate number of islanders now? 6,000 odd. So much has been said respecting the leasing of land by islanders that I think it is as well to inform the Commission of the action taken by the department when first it came under notice. I find that in 1894 the Inspector of Pacific Islanders at Ingham wired to me as follows:—

"Complaints made to me that landowners here are renting land to time-expired kanakas who are not ticketed 'boys' for the purpose of growing corn. Consider this is an evasion of the Act. Please advise."

I wrote to the Principal Under Secretary as follows:—

"Cannot the Inspector prosecute the owner of the land for illegally employing the islanders? He cannot lease them the land. I attach the only papers I have bearing upon the case."

I was under the impression that islanders could not lease land. My letter was referred to the Attorney-General (the late Hon. T. J. Byrnes), who gave the following opinion on it.

"There is nothing to prevent a genuine leasing of land to a time-expired 'boy.' If it is merely illusive and a cloak for employing the 'boy' in forbidden agriculture, then it is illegal. The onus of proving the genuineness of the lease is really on the defendant. See Sec. 13, Amendment Act of 1884."

I then wrote to the Under Secretary for Justice as follows:—

"Does the Attorney-General, in his last opinion, mean 'exempt islanders' when he uses the term 'time-expired boys.' His first decision, of the 23-11-91 (attached), leads me to think not. If I am wrong, it simply means this: An employer can introduce 100 'boys' to-day direct from the islands, employ them for three years, and then cut up his estate and lease it to them. In the case submitted by the travelling inspector the 'boys' are time-expired but not exempt. You might ask Mr. Byrnes, without the loss of time in sending in the papers in the usual formal way, and let me know."

I received the following opinion from Mr. Byrnes:—

"There is no doubt the spirit of the Acts is entirely against the course which is attempted to be pursued, but as these Acts are restrictive of the liberty of trade, they must be construed strictly. A time-expired 'boy' cannot be employed otherwise than in tropical agriculture, but I see nothing in the Act to prevent such a man genuinely taking a piece of land on lease and working it for his own profit. I quite saw the possibility of evasion by this means, but the department will have to be vigilant and prosecute in these cases, as by section 13 of 47 Vic., No. 12 (Act of 1884), the onus of proving that the islander working the leased land was not employed would be then on the defendant."

Then in January last a paragraph appeared in the *Daily Mail* announcing that there was a large increase in the number of "boys" leasing land in the Nambour district, and I wrote to the Under Secretary to the Chief Secretary, drawing attention to the matter in these terms:—

"Brisbane, 31st January, 1906.

"SIR,—I have the honour to draw your attention to the attached cutting from to-day's *Daily Mail* relative to the proposed increasing of leasing land by Pacific Islanders in the Nambour district. Assuming that there is nothing from a strictly legal point to prevent the leasing of land to islanders, it is a matter that will require strict supervision. What landowners do in most cases is to give an agreement to lease, which is not registered in the Real Property Office, and thus in no way protects the islander in case of sale of the land or the foreclosing by a mortgagee upon the land so leased. I would be glad of legal advice as to the exact position.

"I believe it is quite legal to lease land in proper form, but do not know whether the unregistered lease, being really an agreement, can be forbidden as contrary to the provisions of the Pacific Islanders Act. If the latter is illegal, the course is tolerably easy; but if not, a good deal of trouble, I fear, is ahead of us. The common practice is for the 'boy' to take a piece of standing scrub; he fells it, and if anything then occurs to upset the transaction the islander loses the cost of his labour, and the person taking possession gets the land improved for nothing. Hitherto there has been little or no trouble, but if the business is going to increase unprincipled persons will come in for no other purpose than exploiting the islander."

The opinion given by the Department of Justice on the point was as follows:—

"The scope of the Pacific Island Labourers Acts does not extend beyond providing rules for their introduction to the State and their treatment as labourers when here; and I am of opinion that the officers of the Department of Immigration have no control over any contracts made by islanders other than contracts of service. There is nothing in these statutes to prohibit an islander leasing land, and though they may not be sufficiently educated to appreciate the weakness of their title under an agreement to lease only, still they have as much remedy under such an agreement, in the shape of an action for damages, as any other person. Of course, if the person they lease from is a man of straw the remedy is valueless.

"There being no duty cast on the department to look after the interests of islanders under such contracts, I do not see that any trouble ahead need be anticipated."

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13895. *By Mr. Paget:* But, in spite of that, where such matters were brought under the notice of the officers of the department, they looked after the interests of the islanders? Yes.

13896. Yourself, for instance? It is a difficult thing to give special instructions to take what we do not like under the wing of the department. It has always appeared to me that to issue any special instructions to inspectors to go into this leasing matter was for the department to publicly proclaim that it approved of the business, which it never did.

13897. But in the event of islanders in the Nambour district coming to you and asking your advice, or showing you copies of the agreements that they intended to enter into with respect to leasing land, you would consider it part of your duty to give them advice? Yes. I have even gone the length of getting a solicitor privately to draw a lease which would be a fair thing; but, of course, people will not register these leases. I do not think they can very well do so—there is too much difficulty. For instance, a lot of these “boys” are leasing land which must be under mortgage to the Nambour Central Mill.

13898. *By Mr. Nielson:* Very probably the lessors have not got the deeds themselves? Yes; and therefore they cannot put the lease on the title. I have always said to the “boys,” “Don’t lease land at all. What do you want to lease land for?” Still they will do it. They want it, and, even if it is a most one-sided agreement, if a “boy” has made up his mind to get a certain piece of land, he will have it, in spite of your warning.

13899. There is an impression among some of the “boys” that if they lease a bit of land they will not be deported? There is such an impression; but I had a legal opinion upon the point not long ago that it makes no difference, and they have been told that.

13900. *By Mr. Paget:* Have you instructed your officers in other districts to tell the islanders this? No; I gave no instructions. At least, I do not remember doing so, although I may have done it.

13901. *By Mr. Nielson:* Have you got any statistics as to the number of “boys” there are in New South Wales for whose return to the islands the Queensland Government is liable? I applied for permission to send a man down, but I was informed that the Chief Secretary’s Department had arranged with the Government of New South Wales to collect the information.

13902. They have no original records of the “boys,” and the chances are that you could not trace them in your records? No.

13903. *By Mr. Paget:* There is no doubt a large number of these “boys” have gone from Queensland to New South Wales? I should say the majority have. I estimated the number at 300, and you will notice that the number given in the return from New South Wales, that you got, is 298. I judged by what I heard and from a muster I had at Cudgen some years ago, when I mustered about 180.

13904. *By Mr. Nielson:* In the return supplied to us the time they have been in Queensland is not shown, the year they came, or even the name of the ship they came in or their first employer, so that there is nothing by which they can be traced in the Queensland register? That is so. At Nambour certain evidence was given by a Finn named Gustavson relative to his and some of his countrymen’s career in Queensland and their present position. Mr. Gustavson has acquired what he possesses without, as far as I know, aid from anyone. His countrymen, however, who arrived in 1900 as free immigrants, some with large young families, after more or less failure to obtain work, obtained the offer to lease land at Image Flat from Mr. G. L. Bury, of Nambour. They asked the Government for assistance in the shape of food. The late Sir James Dickson granted the request as an experiment for three months, and the period was extended from time to time until in the end the cost amounted to something like £348 2s. Some of the people went away after getting their first maize crop, but those remaining represent a good many individuals; two of them have about twenty-four children between them.

13905. *By the Chairman:* Those who remained on the land did well? They appear to have done well, according to what I have heard.

13906. *By Mr. Paget:* The matter of islanders with aboriginal wives has cropped up, and at Ayr a half-caste aboriginal who was the wife of an islander said that a number of aboriginal women had gone to the South Sea Islands—Can you give us any information on the subject? I have no recollection of an aboriginal wife having gone in my time. I think I have heard that one or two went, and they were quoted as reasons why no more should be allowed to go.

13907. *By Mr. Nielson:* Would you know of their departure in every case? I think the inspector at Bundaberg challenged two.

13908. But would your department know about their going? It would be discovered when the “boys” were being mustered.

13909. But where would they be officially recorded by your department, seeing that they do not come under the Pacific Island Labourers Act? They would appear on the passenger list.

13910. But not as Pacific Islanders? No; but we would find it out. I have known half-caste children whose mother was dead go home with the father.

13911. *By Mr. Paget:* They are all noted on the records? Yes; they went with the knowledge of the department. Their mother was an aboriginal gin, and the father was a Tanna “boy,” I think. We have stopped a fair number of attempts to go.

13912. *By Mr. Nielson:* Why? Because we consider the women would be made village prostitutes. They would have no caste in the islands. The matter was referred by me to the Home Secretary—I think it was Mr. Foxton—and he referred it to the Protector of Aborigines—Mr. Meston, I think it was—and it was also referred to Mr. Rennie in the Bundaberg office. All the reports were against allowing the gins to go, so we would not allow the husbands to go. We said they could not take their wives, and, if the husbands had attempted to go, the Protector would have stepped in and had them arrested for child and wife desertion.

13913. *By the Chairman:* The Resident Commissioner in the Solomons has refused to allow white women to land; so that probably he would refuse to allow aboriginal women to land? Probably.

13914. Is that all you wish to say with reference to Pacific Islanders? I do not know whether you wish me to give any information with respect to Italian immigration.

13915. I do not think we want it—If necessary, you can give us some information upon the subject? Yes. A question was asked in the Legislative Assembly about 1,000 Italians who were said to be engaged in mining in Queensland, and we were instructed to make inquiries. The number brought here was 335.

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13916. We have made one or two inquiries to find out what class of labourers they are, and we got a very satisfactory account of them? Yes. At Bundaberg they did not do very well as labourers, but in the North they seem to have done all right. There were 153 at Ayr and 113 at Ingham, but none engaged in mining. I have also got a list of "exempt" islanders.

13917. *By Mr. Nielson:* How many are there? There are 691. I have some papers and circulars bearing on return passages, and I can leave them for your perusal. This additional return passage-money was always regarded from the beginning as the "boy's" liability, as he broke his contract by refusing to take what was offered.

13918. *By Mr. Paget:* In not returning to his island after the termination of his three-year agreement? Yes. He was offered his return passage, and he declined to take it.

13919. *By Mr. Nielson:* He was not bound to take it, because the law allowed him to re-engage? It appears to me that the "boy," having broken his contract, has no further claim.

13920. The matter is under consideration, and we will get to know about it later on? Sir S. W. Griffith was pretty keen on these points, and after reading through this memorandum from Mr. Okeden he said, "I do not think it is practicable for the Government to make a contract for the returning of the islanders."

13921. When was that? At the end of 1890.

13922. *By Mr. Paget:* During the time the Commission has been absent from Brisbane, on three or four occasions the question has cropped up about the returning of the islanders, and assertions have been made that the islanders did not return home, but had to re-engage owing to want of information as to the means of getting home, and they said they could not get any information about ships—At Mackay Mr. Nielson asked Mr. Sage, a witness, "Have not many 'boys' been anxious to go home during the last twelve months who did not go?" and Mr. Sage replied: "Yes." Then Mr. Nielson said: "Do you know why they did not go?" and Mr. Sage replied: "Bother about the ships. They could never get a proper understanding as to when they were to sail. I have known 'boys' go day after day for weeks without getting definite information. That meant that they were spending their money, and they had to go back to earn more." Now do you wish to say anything to that? I think you will get the same information everywhere.

13923. *By Mr. Nielson:* We got the same information at Cairns, Port Douglas, Geraldton, and Ingham? Yes.

13924. *By Mr. Paget:* Then at Ingham, Mr. Crow said: "I will give you an instance of what happened not long ago. On the 13th February last there were a lot of these New Hebrides 'boys' who had just come to Halifax. There were sixty of them, because I lined them up and counted them. They asked me if there was a boat ready to take them back to the islands, and I said I did not know of any boat at that time. I asked them if they had been to the inspector here, and they said that they had, but he could not tell them. I suggested that they should wire, and this is a copy of the wire they sent: 'Sixty New Hebrides "boys" here want to go home. No more money for food. When earliest will there be a ship to take us. Reply paid Dorogarra.' The reply to that telegram came back as follows:—'Re your wire. Better communicate with the inspector Brennan.' I thought he was sending some instructions to the inspector, and, perhaps, some information, but no information came at all. So far as I could make out, the inspector here referred them back to me, and thought I might know something, but I did not. That is just a fair sample of what goes on, and what has been going on here for years."—Can you give us any information as to whether these statements are correct or not? I remember that wire. In the first place you can make statements like that anywhere, because the "boys" will come to you every day and ask if there is a ship, and then as soon as you find out that there is a ship and you ask a "boy" if he is going home he will say, "Me don't think me go this time." It is ridiculous for anyone to make those statements with the view of charging the department with neglect.

13925. *By Mr. Nielson:* It was not done with that view at all? The person who made that statement is in a position to go to the representative of the Pacific Islanders and ask him to take action.

13926. He did, and the representative of the Pacific Islanders corroborated his statement, and said he could not get any information himself? That was because there was no information to be got.

13927. The fact remains that in every district right throughout the North there have been a number of "boys" who have been unable to get home because the facility was not there for them to get? And they have been told to go home when the facility was there, and they would not go.

13928. The facility may have been at Brisbane, or Bundaberg, or Maryborough, but that was no good to the "boy" at Port Douglas who had only £2 or £3? I quite understand the difficulty. This is where the trouble arises: These "boys" are brought out under contract to be sent home and there is somebody to provide the ship at the end of that time. The "boys" referred to had their opportunity to go home long ago, but they missed it.

13929. This is what I want to point out: When they have no money they have to go and sign on for, say, six months, and at the end of that time, if there is no ship ready, they have to sign another agreement, because they have no opportunity of going home? There is only one way to get over that, and that is to provide a fleet of ships to run regularly from Queensland ports, and then it is simply a question of who is going to pay the piper?

13930. From a practical point of view, is there anything to prevent ships from sailing Northern ports? I can only tell you that the "Lady Norman" has been there several times, and she will not be allowed to go there any more.

13931. *By the Chairman:* Why? Her owners will not allow it, because they were so humbugged by the Northern people. They go up there believing that there are a number of "boys" ready to go, but when they get there they find that the "boys" cannot decide.

13932. *By Mr. Nielson:* We understand from your officials in the North that the vessels get as many "boys" as they can in the Southern ports, and they find they are a few short, and they go North and collect a few more "boys" in a short space of time? They have been there as long as three weeks at a time.

13933. At Lucinda Point? Yes.

13934. Were they vessels chartered by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company? No. The "Clansman" was there "on her own." I would like one of the shippers brought here to give his experience.

13935. I want to know how the business is conducted—When a boat goes North, what steps are taken to secure "boys"? The information is sent that a certain ship is going from Lucinda Point.

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13936. How much notice is given? Well, there cannot be very much notice given.

13937. At the present time there are about 100 unemployed "boys" in the Ingham district, and I have every reason to believe that all those "boys" are desirous of going home both from your own officers and other witnesses—What facility is there for them to get away from Lucinda Point, or is there any? No; not if they are agreement "boys."

13938. Can you give me any suggestion to facilitate the return of "boys" resident in the North? The suggestion I made to my chief was this: Directly a "boy" says he wants to go home, take him straight away and put him on board a ship, and settle who is to pay the piper afterwards.

13939. How are you going to put him on board a ship if the ship is not there? We will take him to a place where there is a ship.

13940. At whose expense? We shall have to take the responsibility. With regard to that wire from Ingham, when I sent that reply I knew as well as I know you are sitting there who the man was who sent the wire.

13941. *By Mr. Paget:* Mr. Troy, your inspector at Ingham, was also examined, and the question was put to him: "This morning Mr. Crow referred to an incident which happened on 13th February last. He said that about sixty New Hebrides 'boys' came to Halifax and asked if there was a boat; he said he wired to Mr. Brennan, who referred him to you, and that the 'boys' came to you about a boat, but got no satisfaction—Do you remember the incident?" and Mr. Troy replied "No"? We never supply instructions or information to outsiders in inspector's districts, because we want to keep them in touch with the inspector. The man who is mixed up in that wire would like to run the whole show if he got the chance.

13942. Then Mr. Nielson asked:—"Do you remember any 'boys' coming to you for information about a ship leaving and you were not in a position to give information?" and Mr. Troy replied:—"Very often 'boys' come to ask for information. Some have come in to-day and I cannot tell them anything, because all three boats are away, and I do not know when they will be back." Then he went on to say that he is not always informed of the dates when boats are leaving, and he said, "I am perfectly certain there were never as many as sixty 'boys' came to ask about a boat. There may have been five or six or up to ten." Then he said that it would be much better if an occasional boat started to load up in the North? I quite agree with that. I would have a boat leaving every port, but it is purely a question of expense. A ship leaving Bundaberg or Brisbane lies there at practically no expense except for feeding the "boys," because she has her crew standing aside ready to sign on; but directly she goes North for every day she is kept there she is at great expense.

13943. *By Mr. Nielson:* Do you think the expense would be minimised if, instead of sending the ships from Bundaberg to the various ports, you sent a small steamer to collect the "boys" and bring them down to the ships? It would be far cheaper to bring them down in the ordinary coasters. When you begin to think of chartering steamers you get on to very delicate ground.

13944. Would it be necessary for an officer to be in charge of the "boys" while they were coming down the coast? I do not think so.

13945. Would it be advisable? I do not think so with old-time "boys."

13946. Are they not often interfered with by persons wanting to exploit them? We never hear any complaints. If new-comers "boys" were being handled, it would be much better to have an officer. In fact, we never send "boys" up the coast without someone with them.

13947. *By the Chairman:* If an officer went up the coast now or next week to collect the "boys" who want to go home, and to pay their passages down to Bundaberg or wherever a boat was lying, would you not get a lot of "boys" away at once? I think so.

13948. *By Mr. Nielson:* It is very obvious that the "boys" have lost their regard for the department; they do not look upon the Government as "Mr. Government," as they used to, and in some places in the North there seems to be nobody that the "boys" can look to for advice; but we met one of your officers who told us that he would not have the slightest trouble in collecting all the islanders in his district in a week, and they would go home without any trouble if he told them a ship was there? I think most of the inspectors could do that if they had a ship; but directly they try it, there are men in every place who at once set to work to defeat them.

13949. I am aware of that; but do you not think that a great deal depends upon the character of the officer you put in charge of the "boys"? I suppose that is so in every case.

13950. *By Mr. Paget:* You have no reason to question the character of the officers? No.

13951. *By Mr. Nielson:* I am referring to the influence exercised by the officers—I have known officers in your department whose word and whose advice "boys" would take in preference to that of any other man, but there are some whom the "boys" have no regard for? Of course, every day the education of the islanders is discounting the influence of the inspectors. I see it when I go out for information. "Boys" who used to answer questions straight away now want to know why you ask.

13952. *By Mr. Paget:* The reason for that is the position that will arise at the end of this year? Not altogether that, but because they are being taught so much. One fellow said to me, "We altogether want to know before we tell you what you ask this for."

13953. That is in view of the situation that is arising at the end of this year? I think so.

13954. *By the Chairman:* Is it not the natural result of teaching people to think for themselves? Yes; at one time if a policeman showed a revolver to a "boy" he would run for his life. Now he will say, "You can show the revolver, but you cannot shoot." But there is another difficulty about collecting the "boys." You would want to have a ship that would give you a margin, otherwise you might have Port Douglas sending down fifty "boys," Ingham fifty, and some other district sending forty, whilst the carrying capacity of the vessel might only be 100 "boys."

13955. *By Mr. Nielson:* But that is purely a matter of having a proper system? No.

13956. Is it not all the more reason why you should have an officer going round collecting the "boys" instead of being dependent upon the local officers of your department? But an officer going round would take some time to collect them.

13957. He would use your local officers and pick the "boys" according to the islands they belonged to and according to the capacity of the ship? ———.

13958. *By the Chairman:* You would put such an officer in such a position that for the time being the local inspectors would be subordinate to him, and would receive their instructions from him; but the difficulty I see is that in the Port Douglas district there might be a lot of islanders who wanted to go home to

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different islands, and the ship might not be able to visit those islands? Yes. But there is another difficulty. You might be ten short to-day of the number you reckoned on getting from a district, and suddenly one "boy" changes his mind and decides to go, and that would overrow you at once.

13959 *By Mr. Nielson*: But you would not allow him to go if you were already full, any more than you do now—I have seen "boys" turned away at the last minute in Bundaberg? That often happens from the very reason I am just mentioning. A vessel is five short of her full complement and she cannot get her full complement. Suddenly one "boy" makes up his mind to go, and that influences enough "boys" to make ten more than the full complement. Of course the whole thing is a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. If we are prepared to pay for the expense of the ship, we can get the "boys" away.

13960. Do you think there is likely to be any increase in the present cost of the return passage? I think not.

13961. Can you suggest anything that will lessen the cost? The only thing that could be done would be to make a contract with somebody to take the lot.

13962. If, instead of employing three ships with a carrying capacity of 130 each, you employed one ship carrying 400 or 500, would that lessen the cost? I wanted to try a vessel that would carry from 400 to 600.

13963. Would that lessen the cost? It should certainly lessen the cost.

13964. Do you think that a trial of that system would be advisable? Yes.

13965. *By the Chairman*: Do you think such a scheme would be consistent with the interests of the islanders? I think so, if it is under the supervision of the Government.

13966. Could a boat of such a draught go down to the islands? Yes; though she could not do it as conveniently as smaller vessels.

13967. She would have to lie a long distance off? ———.

13968. *By Mr. Paget*: Are you talking of a steamer or of a sailing vessel? Of a steamer. You must have a steamer. I think you could get them home for £5 a head, provided somebody guaranteed that a vessel leaving by a certain date would get so many islanders at so much, or else somebody else would pay for it. The other is merely sporting business, and this sporting business has gone on because they were playing it up against what they were getting at the other end in the shape of recruits. They took "boys" home for £3 10s. when they were recruiting. The only means of taking them home is by getting vessels to leave on a certain date, so that the "boys" will know that she is going next Tuesday and not on Wednesday.

13969. *By Mr. Nielson*: A travelling inspector could collect them from the different districts? Yes; you could have a travelling inspector.

ARTHUR HUGH NEVILLE USSHER, Government Agent, further examined:

A. H. N.
Usher.

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13970. *By the Chairman*: You gave evidence before the Commission some weeks ago? Yes.

13971. You have just returned from a trip to the islands in the "Lady Norman"? Yes.

13972. What group did you go to? Only to the Solomon Islands.

13973. What is the date of your last information from the islands; when did you leave there? We left there on the 28th of May.

13974. Did you have any opportunity when down there of inquiring into the food supply? No.

13975. I thought you told me that the ship wanted some food? Oh, yes. I thought you were referring to the food supply on shore. The ship wanted to purchase some food, but we could not get any at all.

13976. *By Mr. Paget*: Was that at only one place? No; at several places all round Malaya.

13977. *By the Chairman*: Does the opinion you expressed on the last occasion when you gave evidence as to the scarcity of food supply when the islanders are deported remain unaltered? Yes; I am still of the same opinion.

13978. Have you been able to form any idea whether the islanders down there are making any preparations for the increased numbers which will be landed there? Not that I know of.

13979. Would it be practicable during the next six months for the Government agents to impress upon the chiefs or the men in charge the necessity of planting food for the supply of the islanders who are to be sent to the various islands? I do not think they would take any notice of what we said. In a number of places on Malaya they still do not believe that the "boys" are going to be returned.

13980. Would the Government agents have time to do that without seriously delaying the ship in her landing operations? We can just talk to them briefly, as we do not want to delay the boats. We do not know the chiefs, except the well-known men. If they think there are a few sticks of tobacco to be given away, they are all chiefs.

13981. Do you think it would be possible to take a number of "boys" for one "passage"? It would not pay the ships to do it. You would not get enough to fill up one ship.

13982. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are there not 2,000 Malaya "boys" in Queensland? Yes; about that number.

13983. Well, would it not be possible for one vessel to take a lot of "boys" for one side of Malaya? You would not get 200 "boys" for one side of Malaya.

13984. Why? I do not know when their agreements expire.

13985. But all the agreements expire on the 31st of December? If I knew their "passages" I would know which side of the island they belonged to.

13986. But could not that be arranged in Queensland? Yes. You could certainly fill up for Malaya.

13987. *By the Chairman*: The idea is that a vessel would not visit that island again for two months, so as to give them time to be absorbed in the island? Yes.

13988. That would guard against anything like starvation down there? Yes. We landed twenty men on the little island of Ulawa, on the south-east of Malaya.

13989. *By Mr. Nielson*: What is the size of that island? About 25 miles round.

13990. What is the population of it? I cannot say, as it is an island we do not work much. I never recruited there before.

13991. Did you see many natives there? A good few. There is a missionary station there.

13992. Did you speak to the missionary? No; he was away at Norfolk Island.

13993. Did you form any idea of how many natives you saw? No; we were only at one port of call.

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Ussher.

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13994. Are there several passages on the island? A good few. There was too much sea to land them on the weather side, and they all went to the one place on the lee side. The "boys" asked for that themselves. Of course I knew they were perfectly safe at any part of the island.

13995. Do you think there would be 300 or 400 natives on the whole island? I doubt if there would.

13996. Do you think there would be 200? I should think there would. I know very little about the island. I have never recruited there, but have only gone to land "boys."

13997. Do you think that increasing the population by 10 per cent. would make much difference? I cannot say. I do not know the island at all. I know there were any amount of canoes came out to the ship, but they had not a thing to sell us, although, as a rule, they bring yams and bananas.

13998. *By the Chairman:* Do you think that is sufficient proof that they had nothing to sell? I think so. We were trying to buy food along Malayta, and we could not get it.

13999. Did you get any reliable information about the wreck of the "Ivanhoe" when you were down there? Only from the black boys. Unfortunately, Mr. Hopkins, the white missionary, whose station is close to the place where she was wrecked was at Fiu at the time of the accident. He came in the night we arrived, and he had not even seen the wreck. I was about 100 yards from the vessel.

14000. From what you heard did you get the idea that the natives were any more peaceable than they used to be? Not from what I heard.

14001. Did you credit what you heard? You have always to allow a very wide margin for their reports. The Government agent will be in to-morrow on the "Armac." I do not think Captain Reynolds will be down; he will most likely go to Maryborough to consult with his partner.

14002. *By Mr. Nielson:* According to the newspaper reports, the natives took what they could off the ship after the crew left her, but I know a case in Queensland where white men did the very same thing—they seemed to think that the ship belonged to them after she ran ashore, and I am not surprised at them thinking the same thing in the islands? I heard that after she struck the bushmen were all coming out on the reef as it was drying. They were carrying tomahawks, and Quisoolen, a fighting chief at Uras, advanced to meet them. He just held up his hand, and the bushmen turned back. I do not credit that altogether.

14003. *By Mr. Paget:* The report that was telegraphed from Cooktown to the daily papers said that 200 islanders boarded the ship and started looting her before the white men left? Of course, they did not tell me that. You have had the white men's report. I heard that the forty-one "returns" who were on board at the time the "Ivanhoe" struck got their boxes up and threw them overboard. The Malayta men told me that; but very likely the Malayta men stole the boxes and threw them overboard themselves.

14004. *By the Chairman:* Did you hear of any recent outrages in Malayta? I heard from the Rev. Mr. Hopkins that three "boys" were shot at Kawarria, 15 or 20 miles north of Fiu, and that two of them were eaten.

14005. *By Mr. Nielson:* It was some of Mr. Hopkins's mission "boys" who shot three bushmen on that occasion, was it not? Yes. The bushmen came down and started to fire first. They fired into the wrong house, and the man got his gun and shot three of them before they could get away.

14006. Then the missionary effect wore off suddenly, and they ate their victims? Yes.

14007. *By the Chairman:* Did you hear what became of the bodies? Mr. Hopkins said that they ate two of them.

14008. His own mission "boys" ate them? I suppose so. He did not say so, but they would do it. They are carcass butchers. If any of their men get shot, they sell them to another tribe.

14009. On this occasion the mission "boys" ate these two men? I did not ask him, but it was the missionary "boys" that shot them. Mr. Hopkins spoke to me about the scheme for landing "boys" at Fiu, and I said, "But it is only a swamp at Fiu"; and he said, "It was a swamp, but you could land them at Auki, which is about 5 miles from the mission station at Fiu."

14010. *By Mr. Paget:* The mission station is being removed to that place, is it not? Mr. Hopkins was talking about it. He said they would get on the high land there, and would have their gardens at Fiu. The missionary who was there before Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Williams, is now in North Queensland, working for Bishop Frodsham.

14011. Have you arrived at any conclusion with reference to the method by which the islanders can be deported from Queensland? I have not. The ships that are now in the trade cannot do the work; it is impossible.

14012. The question is, whether it would be wise to send them down in vessels that could carry 500 or 600? Six hundred would be rather a big order. At the very outside, 400 or 500 might be sent. You might get the Malayta men away quickly at that rate.

14013. The object is to avoid visiting the same island or the same locality too quickly again with fresh "boys" before the last batch have had time to shake down into their places? Yes.

14014. *By Mr. Paget:* How did you find the temper of the "boys" at the various passages you visited—Were there any signs of hostility? No. I have not had any trouble at the islands for four or five years. If you were sending down large numbers like that, some rule ought to be made for the ships to lie at a place for two or three days. Before they leave the boat I always ask them, "You all right here?" I have had them refuse to go ashore at Fiu, and I have taken them right round to Uras, at the other side of the island. A ship cannot be expected to lie at a place for a day or two. The friends of the "boys" may not be down, but it is impracticable to lie there sometimes.

14015. If the bushmen are not down to receive their friends, what are you to do with the "boys"? You must take them somewhere else.

14016. You cannot lie on the weather side of the island? No. If you do, you endanger the ship.

14017. *By Mr. Nielson:* What do you do now? I have taken them round to wherever they want to go ashore, and then I have made a note of it in my report.

14018. The same thing could be done again? It is all right when you are sending one here and another there.

14019. Would they not be all the safer if they went in numbers than if they went one or two at a time? I do not think they would. If the natives came down in large numbers they would have no show. They would be unprotected, and the bushmen get firearms, wherever they get them from. No one seems to know, but they have them.

14020. *By the Chairman:* Would it not greatly increase the expense of shipping them if the ships were allowed to charge demurrage? Undoubtedly.

A. H. N.
Ussher.

13 June, 1906.

14021. *By Mr. Nielson*: If a "boy" wants to go ashore now, he goes, and no one waits to see if he is all right? Yes, we do. I never land a "boy" until he tells me he is all right. Then I regard my responsibility as ended.

14022. What difference is there between two "boys" telling you they are all right and twenty telling you they are all right? If 200 or 300 "boys" come down to the boat, the "returns" would be frightened, and frequently they ask if the ship is going to anchor for a day or two. When I say "No," they say, "Then me frightened to go ashore." Then I tell them, "You go in the boat and see if your friends are there, and, if not, you come back to the ship"; and I tell them I will take them over to Mr. Woodford at Tulagi.

14023. *By the Chairman*: What happens when you take them to Tulagi? The Commissioner takes them. I never really had to take a "boy" to Tulagi.

14024. Could it possibly matter if there was one "boy" or twenty? When there are large numbers the natives are on the lookout for them. There is a sort of bush telegraph at work, and a ship no sooner touches on one end of the island than it is known right up at the other end.

14025. *By Mr. Nielson*: Who would be on the lookout? The bushmen.

14026. Their friends? Yes; and their enemies too.

14027. I do not see how it could make any difference if a number were landed or only one or two? You would think so if you went down there.

14028. Are twenty "boys" more likely to be interfered with than ten? That would depend on the number to receive them. When they know that there are numbers to be landed they would be prepared and would camp there. If it was a weak tribe they might go for those fellows ashore.

14029. That is a condition of things that has always obtained ashore? Yes; it has always obtained there. I never had any difficulty in landing. If they do not meet friends I tell them I will take them to the Commissioner, but, as a matter of fact, I have never had to take one "boy" to the Commissioner.

14030. It would not make any difference to take thirty round to the Commissioner? It would be an extra expense to the ship.

14031. But it would not affect the "boys"? I think it would.

14032. At the present time there are three boats in the trade, and recently they left Queensland at the one time—Presuming that each of these boats had some "boys" for one particular village, whether the three boats arrived there at the one time or at different times it could not make any difference from the safety point of view so far as I can see?

14033. *By Mr. Paget*: Would the landing of twenty "boys" be likely to excite their cupidity to a greater extent than if only one "boy" were landed? Their cupidity would be excited when they saw a lot of boxes coming. Two or three would land much safer than twenty.

14034. I am speaking purely from the islander's point of view? Exactly. I have never seen any boxes broken on the beach myself, but others tell me that they have seen it frequently. On one occasion I landed two "boys" and asked them if they were all right, and they said they were. I heard afterwards that their boxes were smashed, but I do not know if it is true or not.

14035. *By Mr. Nielson*: Is it not possible between now and the end of the year for the Government agents to go down and make inquiry and get some reliable information about the state of things in the islands? I do not think you can get reliable information from the natives. They do not take the slightest notice of what you say. If you say that there are no more "boys" to come to Queensland, they will tell you that you are a liar. I was told I was a liar two or three times on the beaches this time.

14036. They must know that the "boys" are not coming to Queensland now? They must see it for themselves, but they do not believe it.

14037. *By Mr. Paget*: I suppose they think the "boys" are going from other "passages," but not from theirs? I do not know what they think. I was down there once in 1890, and told them the recruiting of "boys" was stopped, and four months later I was down there again recruiting, and they said, "You told us the trade was stopped, and here you are coming back again." This has been done once or twice. They suspended the Act in 1896 for a time.

14038. *By Mr. Nielson*: The "boys" are not such fools that they cannot see that the ships are going down and back much quicker than before? But they tell you that you are a liar, and it is not nice to be called a liar.

14039. Do not the return "boys" tell them? I do not know. Some of them are keen on coming back. On one occasion when I asked some "boys" if they were coming to Queensland there was a rush, and I had to put them out of the boat. They certainly do not believe that the recruiting has been stopped. I was talking to Mr. Woodford about the same thing.

14040. *By Mr. Paget*: You do not think the sending of presents to the chiefs would induce them to start planting food supplies in the next six months? No; it would not be of the slightest use, and you would lose your stuff.

14041. *By the Chairman*: Would it be any good to send food down? No.

14042. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are they making preparations at the mission stations? I do not know. Mr. Hopkins told me that they were planting at Auki and at Fiu.

(Brisbane II.)

TUESDAY, 19 JUNE, 1906.

PRESENT:

MR. R. A. RANKING, P.M. (Chairman)

MR. W. T. PAGET, M.L.A.

MR. C. F. NIELSON, M.L.A.

WILLIAM REES REYNOLDS, Captain and Part Owner of the Labour Vessel "Ivanhoe," lately wrecked in the Solomon Islands, further examined:

W. R.
Reynolds.

19 June, 1906.

14043. *By the Chairman*: You have just returned from a trip to the Solomon Islands, on which occasion you had the misfortune to lose your vessel? Yes.

14044. When you gave evidence before the Commission in Bundaberg you told us that you were obliged to call at Gavutu first—That restriction, I believe, has since been removed? Yes; because the "Sydney Belle" went first to the New Hebrides on her last trip.

W. R.
Reynolds.

19 June, 1906.

14045. That will facilitate your operations? Yes.

14046. Is it safer to take a shipload of islanders belonging to one island alone—say to Malayta—or is it advisable to mix them? I would prefer to mix Malayta "boys" with "boys" from other islands in the Solomons, having regard to the safety of the ship.

14047. Have you had any recent experience as to the food supply in the islands? No.

14048. I understand there is some recruiting for plantations in the islands now going on? Yes, for coconut plantations belonging to Europeans in the islands; but the planters do not seem to be able to get a sufficient supply.

14049. Is it because of the wages offered that they cannot get a sufficient supply? I think the "boys" do not care much about going to work for them. They much prefer coming to Queensland.

14050. Are they influenced at all by the idea that recruiting for Queensland will be recommended? I could not say that.

14051. *By Mr. Nielson*: Are not many of the "boys" on the islands now working on their own account? There are a few.

14052. The probabilities are that the reason they do not recruit is because they are making little plantations of their own, and traders go round and buy their produce? They are doing that everywhere in the Solomons, except on Malayta.

14053. *By the Chairman*: Do you think that if they go to work on the plantations on the islands it will relieve the demands upon the food supply there? I think it will.

14054. *By Mr. Nielson*: How many recruiting vessels are there at work in the Solomons? At least a dozen. They are small vessels, averaging about 45 tons, and they combine trading and recruiting.

14055. They make trips every few weeks? Yes. They do their recruiting while they are trading. They are not fitted up solely for recruiting like the Queensland boats.

14056. *By the Chairman*: Are they licensed by the Resident Commissioner to recruit? Yes.

14057. *By Mr. Paget*: Could you tell us approximately the number of islanders who are working on the various plantations in the Solomons? No.

14058. *By Mr. Nielson*: Seeing Malayta is a large island, would it not be just as safe to mix "boys" from different parts of the island as to mix Malayta "boys" with those from other islands? It would not be quite as safe, but it would be an advantage.

14059. The Malayta "boys" are not all friendly towards each other? Certainly not.

14060. If you get them from different parts of Malayta they are not likely to act in concert? No; but still it would be better if they were mixed with Guadalcanar "boys." The Malayta "boys" are the only ones there is likely to be any trouble with.

14061. I believe you spent two days with the Resident Commissioner of the Solomon Islands at Tulagi? Yes.

14062. I suppose you talked over matters generally, and particularly about the new Australian law regarding the deportation of Pacific Islanders? Just a little. Mr. Woodford was very quiet on that subject.

14063. Did he not express an opinion as to there being a danger of a shortage of food when the "boys" are returned to their islands? No.

14064. Did he give you to understand that the "boys" could get plenty of work after they returned to the islands? Yes. He told me that, even if recruiting to Queensland was recommenced, he would very soon have to put a stop to "boys" coming to this State from the Solomons, as they would be wanted for their own plantations.

14065. If the islanders have to be returned in fairly large numbers—say, in a steamer—would it facilitate matters if you had two Government agents to land them? Yes, and two sets of boats—one agent for each set of boats.

14066. Would it also facilitate matters if the "boys" were properly sorted out for a particular group of islands before they left Queensland? Certainly.

14067. I understand that the present practice in connection with landing "boys" is that the vessel anchors when she gets to a "passage" where islanders are to be landed? No; we very seldom anchor. If we happen to get to a place at dusk and cannot land our "returns" that evening, we anchor and wait for the morning; but as a rule we are under way. Otherwise we should have to anchor seven or eight times a day sometimes.

14068. Are the "boys" always ready to go immediately you come opposite their "passage"? As a rule, there is a delay of a quarter of an hour, while we get their boxes ready and the Government agent calls over their names, before they get into the boats.

14069. Could not the "boys" get their boxes ready before you leave to? Yes.

14070. Would it not further facilitate matters if every "boy" leaving Queensland was supplied with a ticket or badge corresponding with his number in the official register? Yes.

14071. That would enable them to be easily identified on board ship? Yes; but they would frequently change their badges. In the recruiting days, when we used to number them, we had some trouble with them, as they exchanged numbers.

14072. *By the Chairman*: Why? I really do not know. After I put the badge round a "boy's" neck, he would take it off and put it round his ankle. They did not like to be ticketed. With 500 "boys" on the deck of a ship, it would take some time to get the crowd into the boats. If you only wanted half a dozen it would take some time to pick them out. We sometimes find great difficulty in doing it with 150 on board, and it would be far more difficult with 500 on board.

14073. *By Mr. Nielson*: Do you not think that "boys" who have been some time in Queensland would know what the badge meant? They ought to.

14074. If you supplied them with a badge or a ticket, they would take care of it? I dare say they could be taught to do so.

14075. It could be impressed upon them that it was necessary to facilitate their getting home? Yes; it would not be a bad thing.

14076. I understand that the greatest delay in connection with the return of islanders hitherto has been at the Queensland end? Yes.

14077. If facilities were given at this end to have the passenger list and the passengers ready when the ship returned from the islands, it would not only save time, but probably expense as well? It would certainly save expense. The difficulty we have had has been in collecting the "boys."

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14078. Is there any objection to vessels calling at the Northern ports of Queensland for "boys"? It makes it more expensive.

14079. *By the Chairman:* How? If I arrive at a Northern port, the Queensland Government will not allow the shipping inspector there to survey the ship, and I would have to wait until the inspector from Brisbane came up. If I were at Cairns, it might take fully a week to get him up, and I could not do anything until he came.

14080. Are there no persons there competent to survey the ship? Yes.

14081. Why cannot you get her surveyed there? The Queensland Government issued a regulation insisting on all vessels being surveyed by the one man from Brisbane.

14082. *By Mr. Nielson:* Provided that facilities existed for getting ships surveyed in the North, would it add to the cost of returning the islanders if you called at the Northern ports? It would decrease the cost.

14083. It would also save time? Yes.

14084. There is no objection to any of the ports as ports to sail from? Not a bit. Cairns and Lucinda Point would be better places to leave with the Solomon "boys" than the South.

14085. *By Mr. Paget:* There is an opening in the Barrier Reef there? Yes; it could be done much quicker.

14086. *By the Chairman:* The principal object is not to get the islanders back as quickly as possible, but to get them back as safely as possible? Yes.

14087. Now that you are landing, and not recruiting, how do you let the hill "boys" know that some of their friends are going to be landed at their "passage"? We never do that. If we attempted to do it we might have to wait a week.

14088. If you have to land a single hill "boy," and his friends do not know that he is there, will his state not be rather a parious one? In a case like that we take him in the boat, and, if he recognises someone on shore—nearly all the bush "boys" come down to the salt water occasionally—and if he says, "I'm all right. I savel this fellow. I go ashore here," I land him.

14089. Suppose he does not recognise anyone? We would take him aboard the ship again.

14090. What do you do with him then? I have never had a "boy" refuse to land like that. If one did we should have to take him to the Resident Commissioner's place.

14091. When you were recruiting, it was worth your while to hang about for a few days till the bush "boys" came down, as you would probably recruit some of them; now the object is to get away as quickly as possible? That is so.

14092. How is a bush "boy's" safety cared for now? I have never had a "boy" refuse to land at his "passage," but some have expressed a wish to go ashore at Mr. Woodford's place before they got to their "passages."

14093. It is only comparatively recently that you have ceased to recruit, so that you have not had much experience of landing "boys" without recruiting? I have made several trips, but I have never had a "boy" refuse to land.

14094. Or land unwillingly? Never. The "boy" would never leave the boat.

14095. *By Mr. Paget:* You have landed "boys" at Tulagi at their own express wish? Yes.

14096. That is within the last eighteen months? It is more than that. It is over two years since the recruiting was stopped.

14097. *By Mr. Nielson:* Would it make any difference to the safety of "boys" belonging to a bush tribe whether they were landed singly or in small numbers or in large numbers? They would be safer if landed in large numbers. Of course, it would be still safer if the ship waited until their friends came down to the "passage."

14098. But that is impracticable? You never know how long it will be before they come down.

14099. *By the Chairman:* An agreement has been made to land each "boy" at his own "passage"—Do you not read into that agreement an implied undertaking that you will land him there safely? Yes.

14100. Do you think it would be landing him safely to dump him down amongst a hostile tribe? No. If that were done in Malaya, perhaps the "boy" might not be killed, but he would certainly lose his box.

14101. Would he be likely to be enslaved? No; they would either take his box or kill him.

14102. *By Mr. Nielson:* Are the islanders generally aware that their friends in Queensland are returning home? Yes.

14103. Are they expecting them to come shortly? Some of the old hands who landed on my last trip knew the exact time.

14104. That is 31st December next? Yes.

14105. Are they likely to tell their friends on the islands that their friends are coming back? There is no doubt they will tell them that; but, as we have not much communication with the "boys" living on the hills, I cannot say whether they know.

14106. But, from your knowledge of the islanders, you think they relate the news to one another? Yes.

14107. Instead of putting on a number of sailing vessels, would it be preferable to put on steamers carrying 400 or 500? It would be preferable to put on a steamer if she could be kept going all the time; but the expense would be too great if, after making a trip or two, she had to lie up for three or four weeks.

14108. Provided she was subjected to no delays at the Queensland end, it would be preferable? Yes.

14109. I suppose there would be some difficulty, if a large number of small vessels were put into the trade, in getting captains who knew the islands and the "passages"? Yes. The three Government agents who are now employed are good men, and they know the "passages" very well.

14110. Supposing a steamer was put on and the "boys" were landed in considerable numbers, do you think they would be absorbed in the islands, and that they would be all right so far as their safety and food are concerned? Yes, except on Malaya.

14111. Do you think many of the "boys" will be likely to recruit from Malaya after they returned from Queensland? I think so.

14112. *By the Chairman:* For the plantations on the islands? Yes. It is mostly Malaya "boys" who have recruited, although a vessel recruited fifty from Guadalcanar just before we arrived this last time.

14113. *By Mr. Nielson:* Mr. Woodford told you that shortly he would have to stop recruiting from Malaya? Yes; from the Solomons for Queensland.

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14114. That would include Malayta? Yes.

14115. From that remark, would you not take it that there is plenty of employment for the "boys" in the islands? That is what he said.

14116. *By the Chairman:* At a price? I think the "boys" get £6 a year down there.

14117. *By Mr. Nielson:* There would be plenty of employment, so that they could earn a living? I think so.

14118. *By the Chairman:* But that living would not be anything like as good as the living which they have been making in Queensland? Not nearly as good.

14119. *By Mr. Paget:* They are neither paid the same rate of wages nor fed as well as in Queensland? No.

14120. Mr. Ussher gave the following evidence the other day with regard to the wreck of the "Ivanhoe" and the occurrences that took place in connection with the wreck:—

Did you get any reliable information about the wreck of the "Ivanhoe" when you were down there? Only from the black boys. Unfortunately, Mr. Hopkins, the white missionary, whose station is close to the place where she was wrecked, was at Piu at the time of the accident. He came in the night we arrived, and he had not even seen the wreck. I was about 100 yards from the vessel.

From what you heard, did you get the idea that the natives were any more peaceable than they used to be? Not from what I heard.

Did you credit what you heard? You have always to allow a very wide margin for their reports. The Government agent will be in to-morrow on the "Aramac." I do not think Captain Reynolds will be down; he will most likely go to Maryborough to consult with his partner.

By Mr. Nielson: According to the newspaper reports, the natives took what they could off the ship after the crew left her, but I know a case in Queensland where white men did the very same thing—they seemed to think that the ship belonged to them after she ran ashore, and I am not surprised at them thinking the same thing in the islands? I heard that after she struck the bushmen were all coming out on the reef as it was drying. They were carrying tomahawks, and Quisooolea, a fighting chief at Uras, advanced to meet them. He just held up his hand, and the bushmen turned back. I do not credit that altogether.

By Mr. Paget: The report that was telegraphed from Cooktown to the daily papers said that 200 islanders boarded the ship and started looting her before the white men left? Of course, they did not tell me that. You have had the white men's report. I heard that the forty-one "returns" who were on board at the time the "Ivanhoe" struck got their boxes up and threw them overboard. The Malayta men told me that; but very likely the Malayta men stole the boxes and threw them overboard themselves.

Is that so? The "returns" themselves started to get their boxes ashore, and afterwards the Malayta "boys" helped them.

14121. *By Mr. Nielson:* Were the effects of the "returns" safe after they got them ashore? I do not think so in the case of all of them. Those that Quisooolea took charge of were safe, but I think quite one half of them would lose their boxes.

14122. The impression has got abroad in some quarters that, after the "Ivanhoe" was wrecked, the natives practically took charge of the vessel, and did as they liked, and that they took everything they could lay their hands on without asking any permission? They did to a certain extent; but still, if you were looking at them, they would not take anything.

14123. Did they appear to you like a band of robbers? No.

14124. They were tempted when you were not looking? I was looking after the ship and the anchors at the time, and in less than twenty minutes the "returns" had their boxes out of the ship, and the shore "boys" helped them, and I suppose anything they saw lying about the deck they passed over the side at the same time.

14125. On the whole, you have nothing to complain of in regard to the way you were treated? No; thanks to the chief, Quisooolea, who did his best in the interests of the white men and the ship.

14126. *By Mr. Paget:* Then it is not true that you had to purchase the lives of the crew by banding over the boxes of the "returns" to the natives who boarded the ship? No; that is not true.

14127. *By Mr. Nielson:* Was there ever any indication given that your lives were in danger? Had it not been for the chief, they would have been in danger.

14128. But there were no threats used? No; but you never knew how the scale would turn.

14129. Naturally, you took no chances? That is so. Had we taken to our arms, and assumed the aggressive, there is no doubt we would have been killed.

14130. As a matter of fact, neither you nor the crew were armed at all while the natives were on board? No; but after we got the ship cleared I armed the men in case the natives rushed her during the night.

14131. But you never showed firearms while they were on board? No.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

BUNDABERG DISTRICT—COMPARATIVE LABOUR STATEMENT.

Year.	Kanakas.	Whites.	Total.	Year.	Kanakas.	Whites.	Totals.
1887	2,559	...	2,559	1897	2,041	313	2,354
1888	2,572	356	2,928	1898	2,043	907	2,950
1889	2,352	300	2,652	1899	2,280	641	2,921
1890	2,861	350	3,211	1900	2,274	407	2,681
1891	2,739	240	2,999	1901	2,453	392	2,845
1892	2,772	650	3,422	1902	1,508	297	1,716
1893	2,676	525	3,201	1903	1,633	442	2,075
1894	2,766	460	3,226	1904	1,761	252	2,013
1895	2,612	304	2,916	1905	1,327	139	1,466
1896	2,551	434	2,985				
					43,800	7,319	51,119

Whites and Kanakas—General Average, 19 years 2,690

*Whites	...	...	...	...	...	...	385
Kanakas	...	...	...	...	...	...	2,305
							<u>2,690</u>

* Does not include those engaged direct by employer.

APPENDIX II.

BUNDABERG DISTRICT—AVERAGE WAGES COMPILED FROM 18 YEARS' RECORDS.

CLEARING LAND.

		£	s.	d.
Clearing	per acre	2	0	0
Firewood-cutters (or 25s. and no rations)	per week	0	18	0
Firewood-loaders	"	0	18	0
Firewood-cutters	per cord	0	4	1
Fencers	per week	1	0	0

CULTIVATION—CANE LAND.

Cane Holing	per 100	0	2	0
Cane Planting	per week	0	18	0
Ploughmen	"	1	0	0
Scarifiers	"	0	15	0
Chippers	"	0	12	0
Steam-plough Drivers	"	0	15	0
Horsedriers	"	0	17	6
Irrigation Courses (lads)	"	0	12	0

HARVESTING OPERATIONS.

Tramlayers	per week	0	15	0
Tramdriers	"	1	0	0
Cane-cutters (find themselves)	per day	0	6	0
Cane-cutters (old rate, 15s. to 20s.)	per week	1	5	0
Caneloaders (find themselves)	per day	0	5	0
Caneloaders (old rate, 12s. to 15s.)	per week	1	0	0
Cane-cutting and Loading (1905 rate)	"	1	2	0
Cane-cutting and Loading (1898 rate)	per ton	0	2	6
Cane-carters	per week	0	12	6

MANUFACTURING OPERATIONS.

Firemen	per week	1	5	0
Engineer and Fitter	"	2	0	0
Cane-carrier Loaders	"	0	18	0
Mill Hands (general)	"	1	0	0
Filter Press Hands	"	0	18	0
Battery	"	0	18	0
Clarifiers	"	0	17	6
Centrifugals	"	1	1	0
Sugar-room	"	1	0	0

GENERAL WORKERS.

		£	s.	d.
Blacksmiths	per week	2	0	0
Blacksmiths' Strikers	"	0	18	0
Bakers' Assistants	"	1	0	0
Brickmakers	per day	0	5	0
Carpenters	"	0	8	0
Cooks	per week	1	5	0
Cooks' Assistants	"	0	18	0
Farm Labourers (per year £30 to £33)	"	0	14	0
Gardeners	"	1	0	0
Grooms	"	0	13	0
Handy Men	"	1	0	0
Lads	"	0	8	0
Married Couples	per year	40	0	0
		70	0	0
Ringbarkers	per week	0	15	0
Stockmen	"	0	18	0
		1	0	0
Shovelmen (6s. 9d. no rations)	"	1	2	6
Sawyers (pit)	"	1	0	0
Wheelwrights	per day	0	8	0
		0	10	0

APPENDIX III.

VOYAGES OF LABOUR VESSELS LEAVING BUNDABERG.

<i>"Lady Norman."</i>			
Left 1-6-05	...	Returned 2-7-05	
" 18-9-05	...	" 10-11-05	
" 2-12-05	...	" 21-1-06	
" 8-12-04	...	" 9-1-05	

Average, 41 days.

<i>"Sydney Belle."</i>			
Left 28-1-05	...	Returned 12-4-05	
" 29-10-05	...	" 9-1-06	
" 20-10-04	...	" 15-12-04	

Average, 67 days.

<i>"Ivanhoe."</i>			
Left 26-1-06	...	Returned 19-3-06	

Average, 52 days.

APPENDIX IV.

MINIMUM RATE OF WAGES DECIDED ON BY GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF CHILDERS MILL CANEGROWERS' ASSOCIATION.

General labourer—£1 per week with board and quarters.
 Aged labourers—From 10s. to 20s. per week; board and quarters.
 Occasional labourers—5s. per day without board.
 Youths from 14 to 18 years of age—10s. to 18s. per week and found.
 Canecutters—6s. per day without board, or 25s. per week and board.
 Hosedrivers—2½s. per week and found during slack season.
 Hosedrivers—25s. per week and board during cutting season.

Contract.

Canecutters—2s. 3d. to 4s. per ton, with a bonus of 6d. per ton for going through the whole season.

APPENDIX V.

STATEMENT BY MR. THOMAS DRINKWATER CHATAWAY, MAYOR OF MACKAY.

Am mayor of Mackay and vice-president of the Mackay Chamber of Commerce, and tender evidence as representing those bodies. I wish, first of all, to point out that there will be considerable danger to the community if, for any reason, a large number of islanders are allowed to remain idle. This trouble may begin almost at once, as farmers will decline to employ islanders if they thereby incur an unknown liability for return passages. Thus Homebush pays off some thirty islanders next June. Whether the Company will re-engage all or any of these men for the rest of the year is unknown. If they are not re-engaged, then there may be a good deal of difficulty in preventing them causing mischief. This difficulty will be accentuated as the year goes on, and will be an acute one after the 31st December, and as soon as the islanders have spent their money. I suggest as a remedy that the Federal Government be asked to pass a one-clause Act providing that the Minister shall issue special instructions regarding the prosecution of persons employing islanders. This would give him some discretion, and farmers would then probably be willing to find work temporarily for some of the islanders. The length of agreements would be fixed to meet the requirements of each case.

Regarding white labour, a well-organised bureau might do some good; but it should include the work of moving large bodies of men from the South to the North by sea, the employers refunding the passage money after a man has been at work, say, for one week. It is also advisable that the depot buildings in Mackay should be used for quarters for the men awaiting work, in order to prevent their hanging about and camping in the park, or loafing about public-houses and the lower quarters of the town. To the better class of men the use of quarters would be a great boon, and would induce them to return season after season. Application was made by the Town Council to the Government for permission for the men to camp at the depot, but the permission was refused.

APPENDIX VI.

STATEMENT BY MR. F. HAMILTON SCOTT REGARDING THE MARKET FOR PACIFIC ISLAND LABOUR IN THE NEW HEBRIDES.

"Jinghi," Dalby, 16th April, 1906.

SIR.—In acknowledgment of a letter received from Mr. Brennan, inviting me to be present at the Commission sitting in Brisbane on the 10th and 11th of April, I regret to say, owing to being so much on the move lately, the letter came to hand too late to admit of my being present. I wired Mr. Brennan accordingly.

It will afford me pleasure to give the Commission any information that lies in my power, and my having been resident in the New Hebrides for the past fourteen years, during which I have been an employer of black labour, may qualify me to speak with a certain amount of experience.

A number of questions have been submitted to me in alphabetical order, and in such order I will endeavour to answer them to the best of my ability.

Question A.—The market existing in New Hebrides for native labour?

I presume this question applies to British settlers and planters only. I may state there are a good many settlers scattered throughout the group, most of them in a small way at present, but all employers of kanaka labour, and who would launch out on a larger scale could labour be obtained more easily.

Question B.—What quantity of such labour can be absorbed there within the period likely to elapse before the whole of the Pacific Islanders can be deported from Queensland?

This is a somewhat difficult question to answer offhand, but I should think a few hundreds could be absorbed.

Question C.—The rates of pay in the New Hebrides?

From £6 to £15.

Question D.—The nature of the agreements between planters and Pacific Islanders?

Such are made under the supervision of the British Deputy Commissioner (Captain E. Rason, R.N.), and officially entered. "Labour" is engaged for terms varying from one to three years, at the expiration of which they are returned to their homes, unless wishing to sign on for a further term.

Question E.—Possible danger to the deported islanders by reason of the hostility of native tribes?

I consider there is good cause to fear such hostility, especially in the case of natives whose homes are in the interior or remote from missionary influence. Indeed, I may say on several islands, even on the seashore, natives landing would not be free from molestation. I can also well picture a scene in the case of natives who have spent many years away from their island returning to find their claims to their land, etc., "jumped" by others or sold to white men without their sanction. I can quote many cases of natives, who have been in my employ but a few years, who, rather than land, have returned in the same vessel and re-engaged.

Remarks.—The difficulties under which British planters have laboured in the past and are labouring still with regard to obtaining labour have been such as to put to the test the "guts" of many. Since the appointment of a British Resident, a license to recruit can be obtained by those willing to sign a "bond" of £500. Previous to this a Britisher was allowed to recruit, and they were dependent on the French. But there are so few English planters able to afford the expense of a vessel individually, and they are so scattered as to make it difficult to share such, so that any chance of obtaining labour by easy and legitimate means would, I feel sure, be gladly availed of.

If I can, at any time, be of assistance to the Commission, please to command me.

Meanwhile, I remain, Sir,

Yours obediently.

F. HAMILTON SCOTT.

The Chairman, Sugar Industry Labour Commission.

APPENDIX VII.

PRESENT POSITION OF PACIFICISLANDERS IN QUEENSLAND, AND THEIR VIEWS ON DEPORTATION.

Mossman, 3rd May, 1906.

GENTLEMEN.—On behalf of myself and many of my fellow-kanakas now in this country, I am desirous to place before you the disadvantages and uncertainty we are now labouring under. Most of us here are now out of employment, who are willing to work if we only get it to do. But we find the farmers refuse to engage us under the usual agreement, informing us if they did so they would be made liable to pay our passage home, besides our wages after the latter end of this year. Now we have no desire to go to our island at present, nor next year either. When we do want to go we want to go on our own account, and not, as we take it, as prisoners—to place us on what island they please (the Government, we mean), which we look on to the danger of our lives—and separated from what interest we have in Queensland and those of our many dear friends we have in this country—some of us from our wives and children, that are mostly natives of here, and perhaps would not go with us if we wanted them to, and even if they did their lives would be in more danger than ours. Many of us have been in this country for the past twenty to thirty years, and feel happy and content here if we only could get work. We consider if we have got to go it will be as prisoners, and not with our own freewill, which would not be in keeping with the English justice that that Government are notified for, over the world, to all creeds and colours of our fellow-creatures. We know that many of our countrymen are true Christians. These, we take it, are better off than those that are not. They feel satisfied God will protect them and provide for them, even no matter what the Big Government may do with them, that brought them here so many years ago. The undersigned wishes further to state that he considers he holds an interest in a homestead of 160 acres in Bailey's Creek, left by will to me and Harry Lifu (a countryman, naturalised British subject) by one Jimmy Murray, kanaka, now dead. Also, I hold a lease for the next four years at Saltwater Creek, and has now a crop of sugar-cane on it this year.

Witness: G. L. RUTHERFORD, J.P.
To Members of the Big Commission.

his
WILLY X IPI.
mark.

APPENDIX VIII.

VIEWS OF MR. O. GUNDERS, TOWNSVILLE, WITH REFERENCE TO THE ADEQUACY OF THE SUPPLY OF WHITE LABOUR IN THE CRUSHING SEASON.

Will there be sufficient labour for the coming sugar crushing season? I say most certainly yes, and I base my assertion on the following facts:—

Last year there was a large surplus of labour in the two districts placed in the most unfavourable position by reason of the wages paid and the distance from the centres of population—namely, the Johnstone River and the Mossman. I spent some weeks in the Johnstone district in the middle of the season, and there was a constant stream of men looking for work. I saw as many as fifteen men at Goondi before 7 o'clock on a Monday morning wanting work, and not one of them got a job, and the wages were only £1 per week and indifferent tucker, and no work no pay.

On the Mossman the pay was better, but the distance, one would think, would be against any great number finding their way there on spec, and yet a good number found their way there that never got a job—in fact, at the time when the company sent to Townsville for twenty men, there was more than that number camping and tramping about the Mossman looking for work. And just here I want to say that the men sent up could very well have been done without, as the work they were put to do—namely, planting and grubbing or stumping—could with advantage have been put off: the planting by reason of the dry state of the ground, and the stumping because it could be done as well and as cheap in the off season. And when we take into consideration the number of men finding their way to the sugar districts in face of the evident fact that planters and farmers have done their best to damn the white worker all along the line: for have they not said that white men could not do the work? And when that was proved a lie, they said, "Well, the white man will not do work in the sugar-cane field"; and when that was disproved, they had to elude down to, "We can't pay white man's wages"; and that, too, I make so bold as to say, can be disproved also. Now, when we find a surplus of labour in spite of all this, I, for one, must come to the conclusion that the labour market is greatly overstocked, and, while there was a surplus of labour at the most unfavourably placed districts, there was still a great number of unemployed in other districts, notably the towns. Townsville could have mustered enough to have run a sugar-mill to itself.

Now as to wages. It is a subject I would not have touched, only it has a bearing on the supply of labour, as good wages will always bring the man to earn it. I may say I have had a good deal of experience, and I have always found that, as a rule, you get what you pay for—that is to say, give good wages and good conditions, and you get good work; give poor wages and poor conditions, and you get poor work. One thing I can't understand, and that is, why planters make a difference in the wages of cane-cutters and other field workers. Cane-cutting is not harder—in fact, it is easier than, say, for instance, grubbing—in fact, I would take cane-cutting in preference to most other field work. Now it may be said that sugar farmers cannot pay as high wages as people in other farming or industrial pursuits. Well, I think they can; and if anyone will take the trouble to note the difference in the prosperity of, say, the Mossman and Daintree districts, they will, in my opinion, come to the same conclusion. Most of the Daintree farmers have been starved out, and those left have to scratch pretty constantly to make a living. They have as good land and seasons as the Mossman people; but no sugar-mill. The Mossman, on the other hand, is peopled by well-to-do farmers who have no need to work for themselves, as their farms return them a good income without personal work. Or, take the difference of corn and sugar farmers: The corn farmer has to work his land more than the sugar farmer, as he has to prepare his land and plant it every year; not so the sugar farmer—most of them do not spend £1 an acre after taking off the cane. Now, the return from a corn farm is good, indeed, at 40 bushels to the acre; and if a farmer gets 2s. 6d. per bushel he is doing remarkably well (that is 45 per acre). Now take a cane farm: it is a poor farm that will not give 10 tons to the acre—some give up to 40; and, if we put it down at £1 per ton, the cane farmer gets a return from a poor farm twice as much as a corn farmer gets from the best farm in the best season.

One thing I think worthy of consideration by planters—that is, establishing permanent (shall I say labour?) groups. It could be done in this way: By cutting up land into, say, from 6 to 10 acre blocks, and let men with families have these blocks, on reasonable terms, to make homes for themselves and where they could profitably use their labour in the off season. In this way a standing army of practical and reliable men would always be at hand. I also think a responsible labour bureau would be a great help, as some district may want labour and others may have a surplus; so that, while men are looking for work that they never get in one district, other districts may want men, and none to be had, as they are somewhere else. One thing more. There has been a good deal of misrepresentation about the labour market, and from time to time we see in the papers that such and such district has a labour famine. Now when men find, on going there, that it is the other way about—that they have spent, perhaps, their last shilling and tramped, perhaps, hundreds of miles, only to swell the unemployed crowd—they are likely to take the next labour famine reported with a grain of salt.

And, lastly, there is a large number of men that cannot be classed as unemployed. I refer to fossickers—men looking for gold and tin. A good number of these men would find their way to the sugar districts for the season, in order to put a bit of a cheque together, and come back again year after year. The main thing, however, is to give fair wages and a certainty of employment, with reasonable conditions; and I am sure there will be no difficulty in getting all the labour needed. But, if the planters want to prove that there is not enough labour, they can prove it by treating men like kanakas; but it will not pay them. Now we have only to take the everlasting lamentation in the Press about the dearth of labourers to find out whether the planters are really honest about it or not. Take, for instance, Mr. J. D. Johnson's opinion to a *Bulletin* representative. He says the labour available would never be able to keep the mill going, as at least 500 tons of cane per day would be required to keep it going. Now, what makes Mr. Johnson so cocksure about the *never*? And why 500 tons this year when 300 tons was all that was needed last year, and 300 tons must have been all that was wanted last year, as there were gangs on the Mossman last year wanting cane-cutting, but the company told them they had all the cutters they wanted? Or how is it that the same gentleman makes out that, if labour is available, the district of the Mossman could produce 15,000 tons of sugar, or something like 5,000 more than last year, when the mill was kept going a full season, and evidently at its full capacity? But, if they can produce 15,000 or even 20,000 tons, I believe that the labour is here to do it. And, when we see that sugar farms are changing hands at up to £30 an acre, I, for one, want to know, is it a sign of a doomed, dying, or non-paying industry? And the fact that lads of seventeen and men of sixty have worked at cutting cane successfully proves to my mind that white men are not only reliable, but will make the sugar industry one of our greatest industries.

Yours truly,

O. GUNDERS,

Stanley street West, Townsville.

APPENDIX IX.

LETTER FROM MR. JOHN GAGGIN, MELBOURNE, WITH REFERENCE TO THE DEPORTATION OF PACIFIC ISLANDERS.

88 Hotham street, East Melbourne.

Victoria, 21st May, 1908.

SIR.—As I am not at present residing in Queensland, therefore I would ask permission to submit to you and the Commission a statement of some actual experiences in the hope that it may be received and considered. It has been said somewhere that "an ounce of personal experience is worth a pound of mere argument." I therefore trust to your kindness to accept the following:—

I have lived some ten years at Ripple Creek Sugar Estate, Herbert River, North Queensland, and spent some thirteen in the South Seas—five in the Fiji, cotton-planting. I was then for some six years a Government agent for the Fijis, under Sir W. MacGregor, to Solomons and the New Hebrides. During that period some 2,000 kanakas passed through my hands. During the years I have been visiting these groups of islands I went much ashore among the tribes, and know a good deal of their habits and customs, speak a little of their many dialects, and, perhaps as a consequence, never had any quarrels that led to bloodshed with a not the tribes.

I found, however, that fully a tenth of all the islanders recruited came away *siapo* to save their lives. The lads had broken some "*tahu*" or other, spoken disrespectfully of the tribal gods, or to the chief or peace-chief (in the Solomons), or to the village guild (in the New Hebrides). The invariable punishment for all such offences is *death*, and they simply bolted to the first vessel they saw to escape the earth ovens.

This conclusion of mine is the outcome of much actual experience and intimate intercourse with the natives. These South Sea folk have long memories: ten or twenty years make little difference, the heathen priest never forgets—there is always some one of the clan to remember; and then follows the "how" club, in the Solomons the dread of all. Then, also, many of the Polynesians while in North Queensland—fully a tenth probably, I consider—have married either aboriginal women or girls from other islands or even groups. For instance, I have seen a Tanna man marry an Aoba girl in Queensland—the thing happens frequently. Now, if these poor women are returned with their husbands, and probably children, their fates are sealed—sooner or later *they go to the earth oven*. What can save them?

There are now about 7,000 kanakas at present in Queensland, who are all to be sent to their homes at the end of this year. Therefore, if my conclusions are correct, and, personally, I think they cannot be refuted, one-fifth of these 7,000 (i.e. 1,400—viz., 700 breaking "labor" &c., and 700 wives) are doomed (if landed forcefully and against their own wishes) to a violent death in cold blood.

May I ask, are we, as so-called followers of the Christ God, to doom, by our own action, these poor kanakas, human beings like ourselves, and half of them women, to a miserable death?

I don't think this phase of the question has been sufficiently considered heretofore. Personally, I cannot refrain from putting it before the Kanaka Commission. I have no other object than to try to save human life if I can. I have nothing to do with sugar on the one hand, or our white Australian policy on the other. I am only raising a feeble protest to prevent my white brethren in the whole of Australia from doing a great wrong under the plea of performing a just right.

By all means let any kanaka return to his island if he likes; but why, in the name of God and British law and justice, force a lot of poor helpless people to their doom?

I have said my say; I can do no more.

I beg permission to subscribe myself, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN GAGGIN.

APPENDIX X.

EXTRACT OF LETTER FROM CAPTAIN JOHN WILLIAMS, OF SS. "AIRLIE," TO MR. DOUGLAS RANNIE, ASSISTANT INSPECTOR PACIFIC ISLANDERS, MACKAY.

16th May, 1906.

I see by the papers the Government intend deporting all the kanakas. It is rather hard luck on some of the very old hands. Many of them will never reach their homes in the interior; and many of them are outlawed, and will probably get killed on arrival. The beachmen will have rather a good time of it helping themselves to the bushmen's trade; even if they allow them to go free, they will tax them heavily. I suppose it will lead to a good deal of fighting between the different tribes, &c. &c. I should think there is not much risk of a shortage of food, as the returns will be scattered over a large area, and food is easily grown. Wishing you every success,

Yours sincerely,

J. WILLIAMS.

APPENDIX XI.

RETURN SHOWING APPROXIMATELY THE AREA UNDER SUGAR-CANE AND THE NUMBER OF HOLDINGS CULTIVATED FOR CANE DURING THE YEAR 1905.

Petty Sessions District.	Area.	Number of Holdings Cultivated for Cane.
	Aeres.	
Gympie	21½	26
Logan	2,491	266
Marburg	543	117
Maroochy	3,046	241
Maryborough	1,603	154
Nerang	787	43
Tiaro	1,706	66
	10,392	913
Bundaberg	21,680	385
Childers	14,207	249
Gingin	4,656	144
Gladstone	28	5
	40,571	783
Ayr	6,583	85
Bowen	3,302	119
Mackay	30,145	970
	40,030	1,174
Cairns	12,023	102
Douglas	7,787	106
Ingham	14,954	144
Mourilyan	8,243	58
	43,007	410
Grand Total	134,000	3,280

These figures are subject to slight alterations.

THORNHILL WEEDON, F.S.S.,

Government Statistician.

APPENDIX XII.

Commonwealth of Australia.

Customs and Excise Office,
Brisbane, 12th June, 1906.

SIR,—With reference to your visit to this office yesterday relative to a return of areas under cane grown by white and coloured labour in the various sugar districts in this State, I have the honour to advise forwarding herewith the return you asked for.

I have, &c.,

W. H. IRVING,

Collector of Customs.

The Chairman, Sugar Industry Labour Commission,
No. 3 Committee Room, Parliament House, Brisbane.

RETURN SHOWING THE NUMBER OF ACRES UNDER CANE IN THE VARIOUS SUGAR DISTRICTS FOR
YEARS 1904 AND 1905.

1904.					1905.		
District.	Port.	White—Acres.	Black—Acres.	Total.	White—Acres.	Black—Acres.	Total.
No. 1...	Port Douglas ...	338	6,501	6,839	1,207	6,398	7,605
	Cairns ...	592	9,482	10,074	1,472	9,623	11,095
	Geraldton ...	843	6,693	7,536	1,013	6,704	7,717
	Dungeness ...	1,571	10,036	11,607	2,071	10,465	12,536
	Totals ...	3,344	32,712	36,056	5,763	33,190	38,953
No. 2...	Townsville ...	1,058	5,118	6,176	1,544	5,021	6,565
	Mackay ...	13,935	13,329	27,264	17,148	13,282	30,430
	Bowen ...	2,479	765	3,244	2,750	591	3,341
	Totals ...	17,472	19,212	36,684	21,442	18,894	40,336
No. 3...	Bundaberg ...	9,239	13,980	23,219	13,347	12,804	26,151
	Maryborough ...	8,972	7,645	16,617	10,279	7,437	17,716
	Totals ...	18,211	21,625	40,436	23,626	20,241	43,867
No. 4...	Brisbane ...	5,797	826	6,623	6,538	684	7,222
	Total ...	5,797	826	6,623	6,538	684	7,222
	Grand Totals ...	45,424	74,375	119,799	57,369	73,009	130,378

W. H. IRVING,
Collector of Customs.

APPENDIX XIII.

Commonwealth of Australia.

Customs and Excise Office,

Brisbane, 1st June, 1906.

SIR,—In reply to your letters of the 3rd and 5th April last relative to a statement showing the number of white persons employed in the various sugar districts as furnished by producers in their return, Form 30, I have the honour to advise forwarding herewith the required statement, and at the same time to inform you that the figures given are not considered reliable, but only a rough estimate, for the reason that a considerable number of those employed are not permanent but casual, and are constantly moving about from farm to farm, and no doubt are recorded more than once; and it is also doubtful whether farmers have in all cases given the correct number of persons they have employed during the year.

I have, &c.,

W. H. IRVING,

Collector of Customs.

The Secretary, Sugar Industry Labour Commission,
Parliament House, Brisbane.

RETURN SHOWING THE NUMBER OF WHITE PERSONS EMPLOYED IN THE VARIOUS SUGAR DISTRICTS,
VIDE PRODUCERS' RETURNS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1905.

Sugar District.	Port.	White Growers Employed in Earning Bounty.	White Growers Employed not Earning Bounty.	Totals.
No. 4	Brisbane	3,005	63	3,068
	Total	3,005	63	
No. 3	Maryborough	2,442	485	2,927
	Bundaberg	2,285	336	2,621
	Total	4,727	821	
No. 2	Mackay	2,535	423	2,958
	Bowen	324	51	375
	Townsville	462	164	626
	Total	3,321	638	
No. 1	Dungeness	189	190	379
	Geraldton	427	160	587
	Cairns	112	174	286
	Port Douglas	62	111	173
	Total	790	635	
	Grand Totals ...	11,833	2,157	14,000

W. H. IRVING,

Customs House, Brisbane,
1st June, 1906.

Collector of Customs, Queensland.

APPENDIX XIV.

NOTES ON HARVESTING CANE WITH WHITE LABOUR IN CONNECTION WITH COLONIAL SUGAR REFINING COMPANY'S MILLS, 1905 SEASON.

The following remarks do not apply to Childers, as the comparative figures for previous years were not kept, the work being done under different conditions.

At the five Northern mills, while there was a greater tonnage harvested by white labour than in 1904, the percentage was the same, and comparison of the totals and percentages for the past four years is interesting; but analysis of the figures shows that, though there has been an increase at four of the mills (by as much as 7 per cent. at Homebush), at Hambleton there was a falling off of 1½ per cent., or 1,400 tons less than in the previous year actually cut.

	1902.	1903.	1904.	1905.
Total crop	252,000	240,000	299,000	319,000
Proportion cut by white labour...	20,400	39,300	43,800	48,000
Percentage cut by white labour...	8%	16½%	15%	15%

A greater number of men passed through the gangs than in either of the two previous years, the comparative figures being as follow:—

1903.	1904.	1905.
648	617	678

The greatest increases in this respect were at Macknade and Hambleton; while at Victoria (where all were local residents) and Homebush there was a substantial reduction, which seems to indicate that the men at these two centres were more reliable.

Except for 14 Italians at Macknade, 5 per cent. Germans and Danes at Homebush, and a few Germans at Goondi, the majority of the cutters were British.

For the most part, it would seem that nomadic labour was employed, for out of a total number of 668 men who passed through the gangs only 163 were local residents; but it is noteworthy that all the harvesters at Victoria were local men.

At Homebush—where the greatest number of men belonging to the district took a hand in the work—there was a falling off as compared with the previous year, the respective figures being—

1904.	1905.
100—31 per cent.	78—28 per cent.

And, in this connection, it may be mentioned that only 45 farmers' sons were employed cutting, as against 71 in the previous season.

From Hambleton it is reported that two out of the four farmers who employed white labour led and worked with their men.

Except at Homebush, where two women were employed, no females worked in the field; though at Goondi and Victoria, in some cases, the farmers' wives and daughters did the cooking for the gangs.

The strength of the gangs varied considerably, some being as low as 2 and others as large as 24. Homebush and Victoria appear to have been most consistent with small gangs, the average being 4; but not much significance attaches to these figures, on account of the greatly varying circumstances under which the work was carried out.

The arrangements for cooking differed as widely as the strength of the gangs. With the larger gangs, one man was told off exclusively for this work; while in some of the smaller gangs the men took it in turns to do such work, going into the field during the balance of their time, and in other cases the employers arranged the matter. Goondi—where the gangs averaged 11—reports that all gangs employed a cook, and this arrangement seems desirable, though in the case of very small gangs too great a drain on the earnings of the men would result, and, for this reason, the aim should be to have a sufficient number in the gang to avoid high expense for cooking. These remarks do not, of course, apply to the small gangs whose meals are prepared by the farmers.

Concerning inducements offered to cutters to complete the season: At Homebush and Macknade, in the case of the men working on contract, 20 per cent. and 25 per cent., respectively, of their earnings were retained, but no special arrangement was made with the men on wages.

One gang at Goondi also worked on this principle, while in another an agreement existed between the men, whereby any man who dropped out before completion of the work received only 15s. per week, the balance being divided between the remainder of the gang according to the number of days worked.

From Victoria nothing is said on this point; and at Hambleton no inducement was offered.

As to the effect of the heat, Homebush says nothing, while Victoria reports that there were no high temperatures until the last couple of weeks, when the men put out the usual tonnage, but took long spells in the middle of the day. At Macknade the yield per unit of labour fell off towards the end of the season, but to what extent this was the result of increasing heat or other causes cannot be accurately determined; and a similar remark applies to Goondi, where, however, there were many complaints, two cases of sunstroke, and a good many desertions. At Hambleton most of the white labour cane was harvested under comparatively cool conditions in July and September, but most of the men were casuals of unreliable and unsteady habits.

The figures for the tonnages cut per day by white and coloured labour respectively are about the same as in previous seasons, and though the figures are scarcely comparable, owing to the different conditions under which the two classes work, they nevertheless indicate that the coloured labour is capable of more exertion than the average white man employed up to the present in North Queensland.

The replies to our inquiry about the likelihood of farmers making increased efforts to employ white labour show that the inducements of the *Sugar Bounty Act* of 1905 are influencing the farmers more than the experiences of the past three years in an endeavour to carry on with white labour, large areas in each district having been registered for bounty this year.

HARVESTING CANE WITH WHITE LABOUR AT QUEENSLAND MILLS, SEASON 1905.

Mill.	No. of District.			Rebate per Ton, White-grown Cane.	Number of European Contractors.	Number of Contractors Employing White Labour.	Tons Crushed.				Percentages and Tonnage Cut by White Labour.				Engaged for Cutting.				No. of Local Residents.		Farmers' Sons or Daughters.	Gangs.		Average Number of White Cutters Employed.	Average Tons Cut per Day.		Rates per Ton paid for Cutting Trashed and Untrashed Crops.	Proportion Registered for Bounty, 1906.
																						Number of Gangs.	Average Number of Persons in each.					
Childers ...	a. d.	4	4	122	95	...	1902. ...	1903. ...	1904. ...	1905. 96,000	1902. ...	1903. ...	1904. ...	1905. 66 % Tons 65,000	303	...	20	6 M.	25	7.5	198	White. 2	Black. 2	2s. 6d. to 5s. per ton, including 6d. to 1s. per ton for untrashed cane. 7s. per day.	
Hornebush	2	4	8	98	95	29,000	28,000	42,000	38,000	30 % Tons 8,700	41 % Tons 11,400	48 % Tons 20,000	55.4 % Tons 21,079	...	273	318	285	100	78	45 M. 2 F.	47	4	190	1.4	1.2	All untrashed, 3s. 3d. to 4s. 6d. per ton. 25s. to 30s. per week and found. One case 5s. 6d., and one 5s.—poor cane.	Larger % than previously	
Victoria ...	1	5	0	74	10	45,000	39,000	52,000	62,000	13 % Tons 5,800	8 % Tons 3,200	5 % Tons 2,600	5.5 % Tons 3,400	...	80	51	39	4	11	3 M.	...	4	31	1.26	1.49	4s. 9d. to 5s. 3d., with 1s. added for trashing.	The majority of the farmers	
Macknade	1	5	0	43	19	60,000	52,000	57,000	53,000	7 % Tons 4,200	19 % Tons 9,800	19 % Tons 10,800	21.6 % Tons 11,374	...	44	34	121	8	2	5 M.	5	9	45	2.03	1.70	Trashed (ordinary delivery), 4s. to 4s. 3d. per ton. Untrashed (ordinary delivery), 5s. 6d. to 6s. per ton. Trashed (with slides), 3s. 6d. to 3s. 9d. per ton. Untrashed (with slides), 3s. 6d. per ton and rations. 30s. per week and rations. 7s. per day without rations.	66 %	
Goondi ...	1	5	0	53	22	62,000	68,000	68,000	76,000	1 % Tons 620	15 % Tons 10,200	10 % Tons 6,800	13 % Tons 9,800	...	123	140	143	20	25	10 M.	4	11	45	2.09	2.52	Trashed, 3s. 6d. to 5s., cutting and loading. Untrashed, 5s. 6d. to 6s., cutting, loading, and transport. 30s. per week and rations.	57 %	
Hambledon	1	5	0	40	4	56,000	53,000	80,000	89,645	2 % Tons 1,100	9 % Tons 4,500	4 % Tons 3,600	2.5 % Tons 2,295	...	128	74	80	6	8	...	3	16	...	1.3	1.4	4s. trashed. 30s. to 35s. per week and rations.	40 % to 50 %	

APPENDIX XV.

STATEMENTS REGARDING RATES OF PAY IN THE NAMBOUR DISTRICT FOR WHITE WORKERS, AND CONCERNING SETTLERS FROM FINLAND.

Re Nambour Sitings.

Yandina, 11th June, 1906.

Sir,—A statement in Mr. W. A. Cribb's statement is incorrect, if report in *Courier* of 9th June, to the effect that growers in this district had decided to reduce wages 1s. per day, is accurate. I proposed, Mr. R. Blair seconded, and it was unanimously carried, that the standard rate of wages for ensuing season be from 4s. to 6s. per day of 9½ hours (54 hours per week) for harvesting cane; 4s. to 5s. per day for ordinary farm work; or from 15s. to 25s. per week and found.

Re evidence of Otto Gustavson—I believe I am the only Englishman that received assistance when actually settled on the land in the manner these Finns did. I can assure the members of the Commission that I have visited and conversed with these men, and am convinced that not only their but my own success is in no small measure due to the benefits derived from such assistance.

I must apologise for intruding into the matter, but the above, I think, justifies such action.

I have the honour to be,

R. A. Ranking, Esq.,

Yours, &c.,

Chairman of Sugar Commission, Brisbane.

A. W. BOWDER.

A Finn, named Anderson, came to Finbury about five years ago. This man had a large family of eight or nine young children, was some time in the Immigration Depot, and when he commenced on the land, where he is now doing well, was assisted by rations, but only had 2s. in cash, and was very scantily provided with other necessities. This man has now from 10 to 15 acres under cane, and is certainly a good citizen, but when he first landed from Finland had a difficulty to locate himself. I can certify to this case, and believe others had but little more.

A. W. BOWDER,

FRANS NYMAN.

APPENDIX XVI.

LETTER FROM OFFICER IN CHARGE OF PACIFIC ISLAND LABOUR REGARDING REGULATION COMPELLING LABOUR VESSELS FROM QUEENSLAND TO PROCEED DIRECT TO SOLOMON ISLANDS.

Department of Immigration,
Pacific Island Labour Branch,
Brisbane, 22nd June, 1906.

Urgent.

I am told that Captain Reynolds, in his evidence on Tuesday, stated that the regulation compelling ships to go direct to the Solomons had been rescinded. If he said so, he was not quite correct.

The order, or regulation, is still in force; but in two cases lately—the "Sydney Belle" and "Lady Norman"—special permission in each was asked for by cable, through the Chief Secretary's Department, to proceed to New Hebrides, and granted by the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, on condition that the vessel, after leaving the Hebrides, went direct to the Government Residency at the Solomons before landing any Solomon "boys." The publication of an erroneous statement that the regulation had been rescinded might cause some annoyance to the Pacific authorities, and so I beg to draw your attention thereto.

J. O'N. BRENNAN,
Immigration Agent.

To the Chairman,

The Sugar Industry Labour Commission.

APPENDIX XVII.

SUMMARY OF RETURNS PREPARED BY LOCAL INSPECTORS OF PACIFIC ISLANDERS.

	Male.	Female.	Married or Cohabiting with European.	Married or Cohabiting with Native or Aboriginal or Half-caste.	Married or Cohabiting with Native or of his own Island.	Married or Cohabiting with Female Native of another Island.	Married to or Cohabiting with Woman of any nationality other than the foregoing.	In Queensland—10 to 15 years.	In Queensland—15 to 20 years.	In Queensland—over 20 years.	Exempt under Queensland Act.	Children.		Freeholders.	Farmers (Leaseholders).
												Male.	Female.		
Ayr	333	7	...	1	4	10	...	30	17	18	...	11	9	...	...
Beenleigh	77	2	4	1	...	...	...	...	21	36	...	3	8	1	...
Bowen	34	4	1	1	3	...	...	6	4	24	...	5	5	...	16
Bundaberg	552	13	...	1	12	1	...	103	74	46	...	8	14	...	...
Cairns	651	...	1	4	...	...	...	82	115	23	...	5	4	...	...
Childers	176	7	2	2	...	...	...	32	27	15	...	3	10	...	18
Geraldton	375	7	...	11	6	1	3	58	37	22	...	12	7	...	1
Gin Gin	24	1	5	1	1	...	...	...	1	22	...	7	12	...	8
Ingham	500	14	9	9	5	...	...	58	32	31	...	17	13	...	...
Mackay	918	44	4	...	27	7	...	215	262	143	...	49	68	8	155
Maryborough	32	...	1	...	...	...	...	5	10	9	...	...	1	...	...
Nambour	119	21	3	7	14	...	...	...	...	...	...	23	29	...	52
Port Douglas	400	3	...	7	...	6	...	123	63	66	...	13	10	...	13
Proserpine	37	...	...	...	...	7	...	2	10	15	...	9	9	...	20
Rockhampton	117	22	6	6	12	8	...	9	47	84	...	24	26	4	34
Thursday Island	232	...	1	7	...	32	...	12	7	43	...	66	65	...	...
Tweed River, N.S.W.	320	...	3	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	61	35	...	...
Totals	4,897	145	40	60	89	81	3	768	765	648	691	316	325	13	317

APPENDIX XVIII.

PRESENT RESIDENCES OF PACIFIC ISLANDERS AND LOCALITIES TO WHICH THEY ARE TO BE DEPORTED.

Island.	Fort Douglas.	Calcutta.	Geelong.	Ingham.	Ayr.	Bowen.	Froeserve.	Mackay.	Rockhampton.	Bundaberg.	Gin Gin.	Childers.	Maryborough.	Nambour.	Banahga.	N. S. Wales.	Total Islanders.
NEW HEBRIDES GROUP.																	
Ambrym ...	40	36	9	46	1	5	3	47	25	47	2	20	3		6	18	311
Anioteum ...						3								1			4
Aoba ...	26	49	22	56	24	1	2	80	23	17	5	24	1	3	1	10	344
Api ...	24	23	5	69	19	2	1	43	3	19	11	22	1	9	6	25	282
Aurora or Maivo	6		12														26
Buka Buka	6	4		12	3	1			4	1				4		38	123
Erromango ...		9		6				2	1	3					3	1	27
Fatuna ...	2						1	1	1								5
Lopevi ...						1											1
Low Island ...	1			2	1												4
Mai ...	1	2						1	4	2	7	2		1	1	2	25
Mucara ...																	11
Malikolo ...	6	4	3	20		1	6	25	10	9		2		13	2	10	113
Malo ...	5	1	4		2			11	2	4				7			36
Meralaba ...	1		6	1	2					1						3	18
Moona ...		1						2		16		3					23
Mota ...	3		1					18		6		1					19
Motlap ...	8		4	1	1	5	7	14	7	2		1		1	4	12	67
Mow ...	1			2					6	6		2					13
Paama ...	5		20					17		6		2				19	74
Pentecost ...	6	6	11	14	1		2	26	13	17	2	8	1	3		8	118
Sandwich ...	3	5	1	8	1	1		4	10	11	1	1		1		12	59
Santa Maria, La	6	8	32	1				32	10	17		3		10	11		130
cons, or Gana																	
Santo ...	5	10	11	7	5	2	2	21	6	11		12	4	9	4		109
Seu ...																	1
Tanna ...	25	25	15	17	7	6	6	16	16	6	1	7	8	23	7	49	239
Tegua ...	1											1					2
Tongva ...	1		4	2	1			8		27		8	1			9	61
Torres ...								22							1	3	26
Uraparapa ...	3		6	1	1			2		2							16
Valua ...									2								3
Vanua Lava ...	5	1	13	3	1	3		8							7	4	45
Totals ...	190	184	181	270	74	34	31	398	135	259	24	120	22	126	64	223	2,335
SOLOMON GROUP.																	
Bougainville ...							1		1								2
Gala or Florida	33	11	2	2	35	1	4		28		9	3			1	23	245
Guadalcanar ...	61	119	15	16	52	2		143		73	1	17		1	4	43	547
Lord Howe ...	1							2									3
Malayta ...	86	310	170	223	160			275		197		34	1	11	9	7	1,463
New Britain ...							1			3							1
New Ireland ...																	3
San Christoval	6	16		2				14				1	1				40
Santa Cruz ...		1						7		1		1				3	13
Savo ...	8	5	2	3	1			9		4		1		1	1		35
Timbo ...		1															1
Ulava ...																	1
Yaevel ...	1		5		13			17		11		1					48
Totals ...	196	463	194	244	263	3	5	561		319	1	63	6	13	15	76	2,422
Grand Totals	386	647	375	514	337	37	36	959	135	578	25	183	28	139	79	299	4,757

